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ABSTRACT

In this book, the chosen theme is the democratic school or, more precisely, the democratization of school processes. Democratization as a concept provides a firm basis for concocting a strong antidote to the norms, standards, and uniformity of the application of market logic to educational analysis and policymaking. By pointing the spotlight directly upon the "differences" between people and groups and how these are both something one has to deal with in some way or other and something that provides possibilities for fruitful, creative life chances, the debate is continually forced open about how to define the "three Es" of market principles in education--economy, efficiency, and effectiveness--as a basis for resistance. The book is divided into the following chapters: (1) "Democratic Action Research Entrances"; (2) "How Are Teachers Important?" (3) "Why Not Just Leave the School in Peace?" (4) "How to Create a More Democratic Lifestyle?" (5) "Making Classroom Practice a Theme"; (6) "Who Owns and Runs This Business?" (7) "Who Owns and Runs the Dialogue?" (8) "Teacher-Researcher Relationships--How Close Can They Be?" (9) "Co-operative Roles in Research and in Development"; (10) "How Can the Methods Be Used?" (11) "Sharing Power with Teachers"; and (12) "How to Get Further in Innovation." Contains a 73-item reference list. (BT)

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Methods and Procedures in Educational Innovation

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Knud Jensen
Ole B. Larsen
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Didaktiske studier

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Introduction

Schools are given a variety of labels. "Good" schools, "failing" schools ; "open" schools, "beached" schools ; effective schools, efficient schools. Each one of the labels reflects an ideology, a set of beliefs about what schools are for and how they can best be organised so as to achieve these purposes. As we approach the end of the twentieth century, schools are at the centre of a whole series of struggles about what counts as legitimate goals and what is accepted as appropriate methods. Increasingly, school quality is being defined in terms of a market environment. Good schools satisfy customers' expectations; effective schools meet the performance standards required by the state and the economy; and effective schools conform to contracts specified by those who fund or manage them.

In this book, the chosen theme is the democratic school - or, more precisely, the democratisation of school processes. And behind this selection lies a confidence in the power of the concept. Democratisation is about dealing with differences - differences in the visions and wants that inspire us, differences in the abilities and the resources we possess to reach towards such goals and differences in what we know and understand. As such, the concept provides a firm basis for concocting a strong antidote to the norms, standards and *uniformity* of the application of market logic to educational analysis and policy-making. By pointing the spot-light directly upon the *differences* between people and groups and how these are both something one has to deal with in some way or other and something which provides possibilities for really fruitful, creative life-chances, it keeps on forcing open the debate about how to define the 'three Es' of market principles in education - economy, efficiency and effectiveness. It is a basis for resistance.

The concept, however, has a more particular power. Fundamentally, democratisation is a force and a vehicle for school improvement and for educational change. There is already, of course, plenty of educational change about these days. However, democratisation has the singular advantage of being a change agency in which moral or ethical suppositions and defences are visible and unavoidable. If, as is unpacked more fully in the chapters that follow, democratisation is about building-up frameworks for everyday life in schools and society, frameworks for the reaching of agreements on how to face and on how to handle the differences between individuals and groups, certain properties emerge. The search to reconcile differences is a catalyst to originality, it inspires the discovery of new ways to act so as to accommodate variety. As a built-in regulator, these voyages of discovery, to pass the test of mutually-agreed deals, have to be navigated in a way in which it is demonstrated just *whose* interest is being served by a particular "solution" and why that is the case.

Democratisation is about dialogue. Handling differences in a way which is meaningful to all those implicated is impossible without dialogue. Dialogues about how we define our worlds; dialogues about how want we want to do is important ; dialogues about possible strategies for action ; dialogues about the possible consequences of our actions.

Dialogue is an important concept in this book. It is seen as central in school democratisation. It is also perceived as the real bridging notion which links research in schools to taking action within them. It seems to us that if outsiders and insiders in schools, if researchers and teachers or policy-makers and practitioners, are going to get together in ways which will progressively transform the process of schooling, then not only will they need strong networks for talking to each other but also a set of principles that regulates these dialogues in a mutually acceptable way. In this book, we suggest that democratic action research satisfies both these demands.

The book is itself something of a dialogue, a conversation between the authors and the readers. We have quite deliberately avoided a more traditional "academic" style - in which reference to influential texts, supporting quotation and linkages with mainstream theoretical debates are heavily sign-posted. This is not because the ideas developed in the discussion are outside the influence of others. Quite the reverse, and in the bibliography we acknowledge the considerable influence of those other writers who have shaped our thinking. Our intention through-out, however, has been to try to produce a text which reads like a conversation, a text which speaks directly to the reader. To help achieve this ambition, we have also used a rather unusual style to report or reference the democratic action research projects from which the present manuscript has evolved. We have selected "stories" from our project experiences to *illustrate* our ideas and argumentation - rather than to serve as some kind of "evidence" - stories which depict the case.

The first chapter of this book is about ways of getting into social conversations - about how we might make dialogues between teachers and pupils, between researchers and teachers, between readers and writers, more fruitful. It is about making an entrance. We hope you enjoy it and feel part of it.

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Chapter One

Entrances

Getting Started: Long-term Goals and Short-term Strategies

These days, a great deal of money, time and energy is spent on change and innovation in education. New Curricula are devised and installed and fresh programmes are set up for teachers' work and for school development. Committees and boards are put into place with the explicit intention of securing an increase in the quality of education. The necessity and desirability of the quest for better quality in educational and school life seems to be beyond legitimate dispute.

However, it is our impression that many of the recent initiatives undertaken as part of this search for an increase in the effectiveness of schools and in the development of the quality of schooling will not necessarily serve the long term aims of education unless we take seriously the inventive cultural and societal task of the teacher and of the school system - to foster a democratic culture through education.

That's a pretty big ambition! Whilst it is likely that few people would want to disagree with it as a broad social goal, there are also many who would admit to being overwhelmed at the prospect of selecting precise strategies through which we could be confident of achieving such a dream. Certainly, we don't want to claim any special status or privileged vision with respect to either of these endeavours. But, if we reflect for a moment on some of the problematic associated with this ambition, if we try to unpack some of the basic assumptions and challenges that are contained within this deceptively simple little slogan 'to foster a democratic culture through education', we do believe that we can, at least, begin to give some basic idea of what this book is all about. For us, the following reflections on the slogan seem particularly pertinent:

> *What should we take a democratic culture to mean and in what sense is it something worth striving towards, something worth chasing? An* ethical *question.*
>
> *What has schooling got to do with culture and, equally, what has it got to do with efforts to reform or reshape that culture? An* analytical *and an* ethical *question.*
>
> *And what does it mean to 'foster' educational and social development? What strategies are suitable and available for this? Who influences and gives direction to such efforts? What tools do we need to foster' change in a manner that is consistent with the longer-term goals of cultural invention and re-construction?* Ethical, analytical and methodological *questions.*

Before we get too caught-up in complex theoretical debate - which *is* something we will strive to keep to a minimum in this chapter and in those which follow - let us consider a case. The case of the story of a small project in one fairly small school. It is not, at first glance, particularly exciting case - in the sense that it signals new possibilities or startlingly original approaches to educational development. We begin with this story simply because it is a case which permits us to enter a discussion of some of the ethical, analytical and methodological issues set-out above and to consider the question of 'making entrances' in democratic action-research as a way of thinking and of working.

Case study One: The island Bornholm - From cliffs to conditions of life

Introduction

The reader should imagine a school with a problem. In the Third class of the school (i.e., 9 - 10 year olds), following a period during which the normal working practices of the class had been disrupted by frequent interruption of timetables and by changes of staff, the ordinary discipline and order routines of the classroom had weakened to the point that the teachers in the schools felt the need to do something about the situation. A well-tried procedure in such circumstances is for the staff to re-establish 'good order' through the introduction of a stimulating and demanding new project for the pupils, directed by the teachers; and the staff of the school decided to try such an approach. It was agreed that a suitable exercise would be the study of a small rocky island, Bornholm, with a concentration upon the learning of basic geographical concepts and of mapping principles.

At the same time as the 'problem' came to a head, the school had been supplied with some new micro-electronic equipment and the intention was that all classes should be supplied with a computer and that all students should have access to them. But in the class with which we are concerned - the Third class - the starting-point was decidedly the issue of classroom order and discipline; the geography exercise as the means and the use of computers a possibility.

Initiating the project

To begin the project, the pupils of the Third class were given a task by the teachers. The children were required to draw-up a list of between 10 and 20 questions about Bornholm, questions which the individual pupils considered important for this topic. The pupils composed their question on the computer data base and this first phase resulted in an incredible number of questions which, working together, the class categorised.

The next step was for the children to evaluate their sets of questions and to decide which they thought were important - a task made easy by the use of the micro-computer. In the course of the discussion about the relative importance of questions for investigation, it soon became clear that two main concerns had achieved a significant priority. The first was that the children were very preoccupied with social life on the island - with family and personal conditions. Questions about parental employment, about brothers and sisters, about divorce experiences and about the opportunities for children's leisure activities on Bornholm were frequent. The other concern was to do with more general geographical interests, as expressed in questions like: 'How tall are the cliffs on Bornholm'?, or 'How many lakes are there'?

In the third phase of the initiation of the thematic work, the issue arose of how best to find answers to questions in the data base the class had established. Many of these questions quite simply could not be answered through reference to the library and other materials the children had at their disposal. These questions could only be answered by someone who lived on Bornholm.

Together, the children and their teacher decided that a fruitful line of inquiry might be to write to another school class on Bornholm and to ask members of this class if they could help with these questions, questions like the following, which the Third class pupils considered important.

Questions from one of the Third class pupils:

What is your name?

Where do you live?

How old are you?

Are your mother and father living together?

How many people live where you live?

Where were you born?

Do you have a dog on Bornholm?

Is your father a farmer?

Do you play football?

Is your mother alive?

What is your teacher's name?

Are you a boy or a girl?

Do you live on a farm?

How big is the island of Bornholm?

How many lakes are there on Bornholm?

How many rivers does it have?

However, in discussing this method trying to get answers to their questions, the class reached the conclusion that they could not pose questions which touched so closely on other peoples lives without having introduced themselves. It was agreed that the children in the different classes could exchange letters and, for a time, the Third class pupils 'converted' Bornholm to their own local neighbourhood, to their own living conditions, and used their questions about Bornholm as a basis on which they could write about themselves.

This agreement resulted in some widely different texts from individual children even though the same questions provided the basis for composition.

Draft letters:

"Dear Pen friend,

My name is Lisbeth. I am 9 years old. My Birthday is on August 26th. I live in a street classed Artillery Road in Copenhagen. Artillery Road is quite a new street, what I mean is that it is two years old. I have a little sister who is four years old. I live together with my mother and my little sister. My little sister's name is Jane and my mother's name is Ulla. I was born in Amager, which is where I still live. I have only my uncle, my grandmother and my grandfather. I also have a great-uncle over in Sweden and he is very nice.

Amager, where I live, is a very small island. The school I go to is called Iceland Wharf.

What is your name? How old are you? Where do you live? Do you have a brother or a sister? Is your mother alive? What is your mother's name? What is your father's name? What does your father do? What does your mother do? Were you born on Bornholm? Do you have many friends? Do you go in for sport? How many years have you lived in Bornholm? Is Bornholm a small island? What is your school called? How many are there left in your family?

Goodbye and keep well.

Lisbeth"

And another one:

"My name is Adam, and so on. And I attend the school on Iceland's Wharf. I have an older brother and a lot of cousins.

My hobby is birds. I have nine stuffed birds and a squirrel. The birds I have are: a crossbill, a nightingale, a robin, two kinds of jays, an owl, a nutcracker, a hooded crow and a buzzard. I would very much like to receive a letter from someone who knows something about Bornholm's species of birds.

Kind regards.

Adam"

Developing the project

The letters were sent to a school class on Bornholm a few weeks before the summer holidays and the class in Copenhagen received a provisional reply which promised that answers would be returned after the vacation.

Perspectives in the project

For the teacher, the purpose of this project was two-fold - to re-create a basis for order in the classroom and to create a setting, a frame of learning, in which the necessary knowledge and skills of a social science might be more securely connected with the real and legitimate differences in the children's individual interests and experiences. It is significant that she quickly and directly seized on the strategy of making individual interests and questions PUBLIC as a way of doing this. In doing this, she not only addressed some of the order issues by more directly involving pupils in a consideration of how their interests stood in relation to those other pupils, she also shaped a platform for categorizing single topics, for reflecting on their importance and for a shared realisation or insight into different opportunities which might exist for getting knowledge and for finding answers through the use of different means.

For the pupils, the project became a personalised quest. The children's letters were carefully formulated and included a deep personal content - although, as is clear from Adam's letter (above), there were also pupils who rejected the wish of touching upon their personal relations all too closely "... I have an older brother and a lot of cousins. My hobby is birds ...".

But what about the names of the tallest cliffs and statistics of the population, the most crowded towns, the patterns of employments and production on this island of Bornholm? Certainly, we can recognise that some of the children sought to include questions about these phenomena in their study. But usually on a personal level, which had then to be qualified by reference to books, support material and the teacher's professional knowledge; after all, they were in school and had already learned something about what counts as serious knowledge!

This tension, this important question about how teachers can strike a balance in school work and forge real connections between pupils' personal concerns, curiosities and interests and the common public curriculum - albeit evidenced only in the snapshot of a microcosm of classroom life exposed through the simple story narrated above - is a *quintessential fly-wheel* for democratic action research. However, it appears as influence through a wide variety of the multi-faceted proccesses of both action research and educational innovation.

It seems to us that it is reasonable to suggest that what the Bornholm case illustrates, at the very least, is that perhaps this question of the tension between personal and public perspectives and purposes is first raised in a really critical and meaningful way in education when the school begins to give space for *dialogue* and for *coinfluence* to the students.

In the Bornholm project, the whole Third class group (together with the teacher) takes individual pupil's questions as its starting point, questions which are openly discussed. During the course of this discussion process some changes begin to take place:

- new facets are introduced into the work of individual pupils and of the whole class,

- new ways in which knowledge can be collected are opened-up,

- new momentum is provided to stimulate curiosity and the search for knowledge, and,

- a new, and possibly stronger, engagement between the individual pupils' own situation and preoccupations, those of others and the intricacies of the subject for study are envisaged and legitimated.

We could speculate that later, much later, these kind of experiences might coalesce into a commitment by those involved into the kind respect for the development and protection of shared insights and action programmes which serves as a beacon for many social scientists and for groups engaged with social and political evaluation. However, we would also have to admit that here, in this case the point is that the children in the Third class recognise and experiment with their growing capabilities to gain information and to realise the power of dialogue, participation and co-influence for their enterprise. The question is, can we build on this experimentation and extend the possibilities it provides?

Working with the teacher

We can empathise with the dilemmas experienced by the teachers in our case study - and through this empathy we can begin to reveal some of the significant points at which teachers and researchers can make an entrance, can begin to come together to participate in a single research project from which both parties can benefit.

At first glance, the range of issues of direct concern for the teachers themselves involved in the Bornholm project is familiar enough. The project was clearly a success, at one level, in that the children were energetic, fairly well motivated and seemed to find a programme in school in which they could introduce their own interests and with which they could connect their own lives and experiences. On the other hand, what did they learn? And, how could this - whatever it was - be assessed? Or, again, how could this project be related to other programmes of study in the school?

But let us put another layer of questions over those already complex interpolations. Let us see this case not only in terms of a set of experiences for the pupils but also one for the teacher.

First, how do the teachers concerned in this case stand with respect to their professional obligations? Are we to see them as being obliged to be more attentive to introducing children to the public curriculum, to socially useful knowledge - about, say, geographical terms, concepts or applications, about how environments influence peoples' lives, about different life styles and cultures - or, on the other hand, as being responsible for the children's experience of controlling their own learning and opportunities for generating fresh insights. Better still, is it possible to attend to either of these obligations in a way which does not damage the other? What is certain is the *duality* of the teacher obligation is ever present. A teacher can never be wholly withdrawn, completely invisible or merely a vehicle for cultural transmission. The pupils themselves not only bring into the school their own idiosyncratic ambitions and experiences but they also have influence on an access to the content and form of the lessons in which they are involved. The teacher is their point of contact with the world beyond the classrrom, the 'knowing adult', but the circumstances of this role are unpredictable, moving between the capacity to plan, monitor and direct activities according to her own ideas about how to fix details of instructions work styles and resources and a pressure to accommodate her pupils' responses, reaction and attempts to intervene.

Secondly, we can ask what, in the course of the development of this project, actually did change? Certainly, the teachers partly and gently allowed some variation from the existing ways of doing things, from the established routines or *praxis* of the everyday life of the school; these patterns, being mainly introduced and conserved by teachers and mostly under their immediate control. But how deep and secure is our knowledge of such praxis and of how it influences what teacher and pupils managed to accomplish on a daily basis? Could a more systematic inspection of praxis be of use for both teachers and researchers - whatever their personal motives might be?

Thirdly, the case seems to depend upon the ways in which subtle power shifts between teachers and pupils were managed and re-negotiated. What is the basis of this power? How is it managed? And if we can become more conscious of the mechanisms of these shifts and negotiations, might we be able to find a platform for reaching a fuller understanding of education change for both teachers and researchers?

The crucial point, here, is that, for us, the Bornholm story underlines an assumption about how teachers are important, an assumption we wish to defend about the distinctive and central role occupied by the teachers for research and development. As cultural mediators, as the gate-keeper of praxis and as powerholder and power managers, teachers stand in a position at the very centre of projects which try to achieve a more secure understanding of how school processes work and of how they might be developed.

Working with schools

For some years now, discussion about the nature and direction of school systems in the USA and Western Europe has centred upon the issue of "quality in education". One of the more frequent criticisms levelled at schools as part of this discussion has been about how, in their emphasis upon "basis skills" and the public curriculum, schools have been too concerned with cultural transmission and, in tandem, with giving qualifications as a preparation for the world of work. Radical critique has championed an alternative perspective along the lines that experience and knowledge are the tools of autonómy and that work in school is not only to transmit but to produce culture.

It would be quite possible to present a view of the case we are exploring as part of this entrance to our more developed discussion as an exact illustration of this dichotomous representation of educational quality - a tension between a concern with cultural transmission as against cultural creation and self-development. However, for a number of reasons, we wish to adopt and extend an alternative view which is a second important basic assumption underpinning democratic action research, and which gives theoretical and practical priority to the notion of *duality*.

In the Bornholm project we can find many pointers relating to why it is useful to see cultural transmission and cultural creation as two parts of an indivisible process, as different sides of the same coin.

In projects like this one, teachers and pupils come to produce a kind of culture, a framework, in which the particular priorities and activities of the specific theme or plan are impressed upon the larger, more general routines and procedural rules of the class, of the educational relationship. Theoretically, this culture has a duality if pity in the sense that it can be stamped by democratic or by totalitarian traits. It can reflect traditional, established notions of what is to be learned and how this is to be done or new, freshly formed agreements. And it can be governed through power relation between adults and children which does not recognise that they have different resources, interests and insights.

What the Bornholm project indicates, for us, is that, in reality, the truth is somewhere in between. The project began with the intention, for the teachers at least, of establishing a programme characterised by a culture which affirms order and a closed attitude to differences between those involved. As it developed, it became one which managed to link the public curriculum with a multi-culture which celebrates exchange and an open attitude to the management of any differences that exist between participants. It might have been easier for the teachers to stand firm on their original decision and to insist on teaching formal geography, from books and in a traditional way. It is clear, however, that in this case, the teachers became more and more convinced that the changes in the pupils' work methods and topics do not in themselves weaken learning achievements of a traditional kind. On the contrary, it seems as if the teachers realise that if they try to organise their students' work in a way in which the children get answers to their own questions, then they are able to add something to the formal curriculum and how they come to terms with its content. The teacher opened-up more extended means for the acquision of knowledge - more extended than an acquisition of basic skills and concepts. But the key point here is that this dual operation was only made possible through *dialogue* - a dialogue between participants who developed some meeting place to display and to resolve their different interests.

Minuscule a phenomena as this illustration might seem, we would like to develop the idea in this book that working with schools to develop the quality of education necessarily involves conscious attempts to understand the main mechanisms, the grammar of these education dialogues and to be creative in developing new opportunities to extend them. National curriculum policy or the teacher's interpretations of the curriculum can never exclusively shape the form and content of lessons in school. Adults' notions of what counts as effective or valuable learning can never be impressed on children without challenge or reaction. Cultural transmission can never be accomplished without personal re-interpretation and individual creative development. They are all given expression and direction through dialogue: dialogues in which differences collide and get negotiated.

Educational reform and dialogue

Where does research enter this discussion of schooling, the education system and the search for 'quality'. How and why should it be a field for research?

Let us stay, for a while, with the status of the concept *dialogue.*

Traditionally, educational dialogues are seen as rather technical mechanisms through which teachers manage instruction. Dialogue refers to the exchanges through which teachers exercise their rights to direct the content and the shape of lessons. Dialogues are to do with the preparation of material and with encounters between teachers and pupils in the classroom.

This usage of dialogue as speech or conversational interactions has some merit, expecially in the sense that it can help to clarify and provide a rational analysis of how and why teachers' roles and work and those of the pupils are differentiated in particular ways. Amongst the dangers of this rather restricted use, however, is that it can be indicative of a more general view which reduces education to effective training, the teacher being reduced to a skilled instructor and the student to a trainee. In this way, when restricted to this meaning and the applied in practice in the school system, it can produce a tendency which actually counteracts some of the basic intentions of democratic development, such as that to do with the fostering of a spirit of individual autonomy and mutual responsibility in individuals and in education setting and institutions.

At the risk of being charged as being as lustfully addicted to talk, we hold strongly to the view which gives the concept of dialogue a central place in both analytical and interventionist frameworks. But the reference for the concept is wider than that we have just depicted.

Dialogue *is* about talk and conversational interaction. But it also works at several levels and crucially, with respect to educational development and quality enhancement, dialogue implicates:

- an attempt at promoting shared understanding,
- a negotiation about resources, rights and the opportunity to act upon and secure a personal desire or viewpoint,
- an engagement between fresh interpretations and existing customs, between new goals and established praxis,
- and, if it is to be of public consequence, dialogue inevitably takes place within sets of social relationships, within interactional and structural power systems and processes.

Dialogue, then, however trivial or minimal the reference to its incidence might be, involves two actors in interaction. It has a direction, an aim and energy in that it is, by definition, reconstructionist. It possesses important subject-object dimensions; a subject-object meaning (i.e., the relations between the constructs used in a dialogue and the physical world) and a subject-object relation (i.e., the engagement or negotiation between high status people [power-holders] and low-status people [power-subjects]).

The idea of dialogue as the necessary and identifiable core of social experience and everyday life (inside and outside educational settings) is equally applicable to an analytical portrayal of the wider social formation as it is to an appreciation of the mechanisms of small-scale social interaction. Many recent reforms and development programmes in education can be criticised for giving insufficient emphasis to certain features of the nature of social order, an emphasis which a careful deployment of a concept of dialogue helps to restore. We can identify certain elements of the dialogue process discussed above as recognisable features of the social world, of the social order.

- **Social interaction is conflictual**
  More as a rule than an exception, social change and development involves conflict between individuals or groups

in terms of interests, resources, perceptions and understandings, strategies, rights etc.

- **Social order implicates a dialetic tension**
  This may refer to either the relationships between either individual and collective rights and duties or between existing praxis and ideas for change.

- **Social order possesses a dynamic**
  The dialetical relationship between experience of existing praxis and new perceptions can be understood as a friction which has its own energy.

- **Social order is influential**
  Social order, in the final analysis, can only be seen as the outcome of struggles between individual, groups and factions.

Essentially, and without attempting a fully-fledged theoretical defence of the concept, the assumption about the centrality of dialogue made here, seems most useful in that in thinking about how research can enter the educational debate about quality and purpose; it means one does not neglect the issue of power and it means one has some serviceable tools with which one can grapple in this issue. The notion of dialogue we have sketched in this first chapter underlines how important it is, in educational research and development to realise that people are not only either suppressor or suppressed, oppressor or oppressed - they are always also active individuals. That is why we have adopted and make frequent use of Matheson's (1987) concepts of *power-holders and power subjects* to depict dialectical social relations - to underline the view that power and power games are social relations and that the agents of these have both the possibility for change and the responsibility for relating their interests and actions to these others, for behaving as civilised persons.

Dialogue, education and action research

On what grounds might we defend these claims about the power and centrality of this rather dry and abstract concept, dialogue? What is to be gained by making dialogue, as a dialectical process or occasion, both the subject and object of educational research and - as we shall argue later- the means and the method for making this research. One benefit, certainly, is that we can use the concept to secure some kind of theoretical cohesion on which to ground both our analyses and our intervensions. Giving conscious priority to dialogue in educational processes in both these endeavours means that we are more likely to undercover key connections between action and structure, to be able to focus on the actual processes through which those involved construct their shared social worlds and relate these accomplishments to social conditions and operations outside of their immediate interactions. Our starting-point, however, is much modest. Our claims about the centrality of dialogue stem from a basic recognition that the *dialogue is an essential condition of how teachers work and of how they accomplish changes in such work.* And the obvious task for action research is to enhance the quality of these particular dialogues and to reveal wider opportunities for them to occur.

Perhaps we would clarify at this point the link we assume between dialogue and dialectic, and especially, how we understand dialectics. In common use, one mostly finds explanations of dialectic couched in metaphor. Two contradictory parts of social equation are in struggle and, eventually, one of the contradictory elements will be strong enough to conquer the opposing side or interest. This might be true in the development of antagonistic contradictions. But in most social settings the contradictions, the elements in dialectical relation, are not antagonistic and, as a consequence, through dialogue both sides can develop in strength and in quality and the result of any struggle between them is most likely to be either a synthesis of the contradiction or that the struggle is split-off into other areas of concern whilst the basic dialogue is kept alive. In action-research, then, we have to recognise and value the differences in knowledge, skills, attitudes, beliefs, experiences and interests which different partners bring to their educational dialogues and use to make the dialogue happen.

This gives a sharp focus to our understanding of educational change and a move to improve the quality of education. Any new ambition or plan, as either a suggestion or a proposal for implementation involves creating or negotiating fresh shared-understandings, new agreements with others - about new relational rules. Without these, the new idea remains private, inert on inconsequential. We will discuss some of the ways teachers struggle to manage these dialogues later in this book, but for the moment, let us stay with the simple proposition that dialogue is a quintessential property of any innovative change in teachers' work or educational accomplishment.

So, pedagogical innovation and accomplishments in teachers' work perhaps are best interpreted as struggles to establish a 'new' social order. And they are also best understood as dialogical and dialectical in character. But what happens if we try to take these propositions seriously in educational research. Certainly, we have to develop existing research methodology. We will have to provide a set of research practices and principles which is itself based on dialogue and which leads to the development of richer dialogues in schools, dialogues which are based on a democratic culture in that they accept and manage the differences in interest, understanding and resourcefulness of all those involved in the dialogue. In short, we could call such an endeavour - *democratic action research*

Democratic cultures in school and the process of democratisation

The democratisation of education is a process, a struggle, a moving and constantly shifting series of actions and desires. Various schools in Europe have attempted to change educational thinking and practice through this struggle, to move a step further along the path towards increasing the degree of democracy experienced in schools and classrooms.

So what is the movement? What is democratization?

As the public debate certainly illustrates, and as we admitted at the start of this chapter, there is no common definition or agreed core concepts. But, as we have tried to show in our discussion in our first case study, "From Cliffs to Conditions of Life", a case which could have come from almost any progressive school, there are some basic themes which have to be confronted.

In every school, a lot of different interests are present - as well as many external interests which influence life in the school. A key theme, a guideline in both this book and in our research is a concern for the interests of the child, of children. Democratic action research and school development are closely linked by a wish to create a more democratic lifestyle. Crucially, this involves systematic inspection and development of our working assumptions and practices of power-sharing. It also involves dialogue. It involves giving-up privileges and making difficult choices. It involves exploring the relationship between established features of social life and new visions and imaginations. And this connection beween the reproductive and inventive character of the school and democratic culture provides us with our first chapter themes - the key role of teachers in achieving effective educational change.

Chapter two

How are teachers important?

Vision and Praxis

Poor educational investigations, which confuse rather than clarify are bad enough. Good investigations which are simply ignored are probably worse. Obvious though these comments might be, such destinies are often the real fate of not a few research projects in education. In democratic action research, either of these awful prospects is made less likely. As we explained in the last chapter, one of the basic assumptions of this approach is that the whole enterprise is based upon a commitment to the development of an empathetic dialogue between research partners, both as a key perspective and as a quintessential tool or strategy. Development through dialogue has many aspects:

The development of shared interpretations of experiences and ambitions; the development of a common language and meta-language;

The development of links between layers of action - between school organisation, teachers' plans and life in classrooms;

The development of mutually beneficial action networks between different parties and partners - teachers, pupils, parents and researchers. And in this development, teachers are important.

And clearly, by definition, a great deal of action-research in education has recognised this. It has sought to use the teacher's language and images and reflections as a way of avoiding the pathway to confusion. It has sought to use the teacher's unique capability to create, enact or to block pedagogical development to avoid the pathway to oblivion. However, the issue of how are teachers important is not just to do with their special insights into education reality or their developmental role as "gate-keepers" of educational change.

In democratic action research the teacher is important in a rather different way. She, above all others, shapes and gives life to the hundred thousand incidents and events that constitute the everyday reality of the classroom. Whether she reproduces existing patterns in these affairs or attempts to transform them, or both, she is the flywheel of this reality, the praxis of schooling.

The teacher as a mediator and producer of school culture

For the most part, mass schooling is owned by the State. Equally true, teachers in schools have themselves been educated in State institutions, are employed by the State and are subject to the legislative and ideological pressures exerted by the State through policies designed to manage the system. It is not surprising, therefore, that in a great deal of *traditional sociological* analysis, it has been common to see teachers as social agents - as bearers of societal traditions and values and as distributors of socially approved knowledge and skills. In much of this analysis, the teacher's role and function is ultimately reduced to that of a conservative caretaker who is working towards the reproduction of labour power.

In contrast, much *pedagogical or curricular* analysis depicts the teacher as the potential innovator, as the person who has the real power to make changes in the form and content of her work. From this viewpoint, not only is the teacher involved in a steady process of cultural production, through the myriad of decision she has to take on how to prioritise her work and how to get it done, but also, more significantly, through the potential she has to generate new objectives and ways of working.

In the first of these views, there is a clear over-estimation of the teacher's involvement in cultural mediation and an under-estimation of her ability to transform culture and produce new meanings and opportunities. For the second view, the reverse is true - mediation is under-estimated and the potential to be creative is over-estimated. We have to recognise *both* these engagements and accept their functioning in the everyday life of the school - teachers function neither as bounded social robots nor as boundless cultural inventors. Which particular function is given the most weight is always realised in the context of the daily classroom praxis and in the local conditions in which the teacher is operating, and, crucially, must be investigated as such. So, on one level, praxis becomes important as the arena in which the scale of conservative tendencies and transformative potential is both realised and balanced.

The balancing act

We need to be careful wits terms here. In considering this question of balance, the concept of culture used to give a picture of teachers' functions is crucial. In making a contrast between cultural mediation (*reproduction* function) and cultural transformation (*production* function), it is often assumed that reproduction is equated with a closing-down of opportunities for individuals and production with opening them up. We argue that it is fruitful to recognise the *duality* of these functions. In the passing-on of existing cultural traditions and forms, there is always an emancipatory potential. Culture, viewed from this stance, can be seen as having reference to three kinds of social experience:

Cultural products
(Cultural with a Capital C - the cultural heritage).

Cultural Work
(The well-developed traditions in a society through
which its members formulate and express their
feelings and understandings).

and

Cultural Norms
(The day-to-day codes which make it possible for
someone to operate as a citizen, as a member of an
identifiable community).

Can we seriously pretend that it would be possible to describe anything a teacher does to help pupils gain access to any of these cultural items as a straight-forward expression of their reproduction function? Can we really imagine that it would be possible for teachers, on the other hand, to concentrate so much upon the creative side of their job that they end up by helping pupils grasp new insights or ambitions which are divorced from the culture of everyday life? Can we suppose that teachers could empower pupils without actually helping them know and use the cultural heritage and processes of the community in which they live?

Supporting the balancing act

Many teachers are well aware of the doubleness of their work of their mediation and transformative functions. But, when professionally challenged, they often fall-back on Culture with a big C or Cultural Practice, as their main reference, when making a response.

As teachers try to make sense of some of the confusing experiences in their lives - such as, for example, trying to develop a language scheme which provides both an extension of pupil's instrumental skills *and* an increase of control in the purpose of their writing - in moments like these, teachers recognise the contradictions of their job. And it is, perhaps, at this moment of recognition that teachers begin to form their attitude to change. Now we are very well aware of the image of the teachers as a *resistor* of change rather than a supporter, as tending to adopt a defensive stance when faced with innovation - although this seems to be wrong and unhelpful. Whilst it no doubt makes sense to notice that, generally speaking, schools in various countries have an ethnocentric fixation which tends to attract them towards conservative rather than progressive orientations, this does not allow us to conclude that teachers stand *against* change or that they are inclined to refuse a dynamic conception of their work. From our point of view, a more useful reaction would be to ask further questions. Which conditions and characteristics of the social order of the school - both internal and external manifestations - might we work upon to give *support* to teachers in the development of their personal positions towards innovation or towards statis? Which aspect of the social conditions of schooling facilitate innovation? How can research support teachers' inventiveness instead of just leaving things as they are?

Private problems and public issues

As long as teachers' professional concerns stay within themselves, as long as they are individualised, the chances of them being changed are limited to good will or to personal stamina. Unless the *social order* of the school is deliberately re-organised to promote dialogue, the public sharing of private and factional troubles, joint evaluations, shared problematising and mutual decision-making, then it is almost inevitable that the teacher will take a defensive stance towards innovation. But action research can help teachers critically and constructively get to know the social order of their school and classroom; to recognise how oppressive elements enter this system.

Social praxis and classroom life

How is it possible to develop a fruitful dialogue with or amongst teachers which enables them to analyse their own praxis and to create a picture of their own functions, both mediating and transformative?

It is, of course, fairly easy to get into dialogues with them in a way which manages to allow them to distance themselves from everyday lives and cultures. In one project in which we have been involved, for example, teachers were given opportunities and space to stand back from their classrooms and to reflect on which of their working conditions they found stressful and how. The teachers proved to be highly aware and highly analytical. They knew about role conflict, about the contradictions implicit in their work and about how they survived the pressures on their personal resources. But they also showed that this very awareness often seemed to anchor them to conventional and accepted attitudes, views and practices - as a means of coping and surviving. This might suggest the very real danger of such dialogue. If we create a gap between reflection and praxis in action research, there is the danger of pushing analysis towards an *over-emphasis* on the teacher's cultural mediation function. The danger is of reducing the possibilities of the research dialogue having impact on praxis.

Some helpful concepts

To initiate any rich dialogue through which teachers' own opinions, views and visions are actively linked with the very praxis which gives these perspectives shape and direction means we have to use the notion of praxis with sensitivity.

In action research, as a method of trying to secure this control, we have to borrow ideas about praxis from different research fields, particularly organisational analysis, and we have picked-up the following concepts, the use of which complicates the dialogue but also gives a fuller picture of school praxis. The concepts are:

Rituals

Habitas

Routines

Norms

Activities

Myth

We are not suggesting that the above should be seen as a check-list or as a blue-print for the shaping of research discussion. Simply that an awareness of these different features of praxis provides a good basis for exploring constraints and opportunities in the classroom.

Rituals

We use 'ritual' to direct attention towards special but recurring larger events in the school and classroom calendar - first day or last day at school, tests and examinations and other red-letter days. Ritual events in schools are those where the meaning of the event is expressed symbolically, where it is surplus to the activity itself. Quite often, the only grasp the participants have of the ritual is that they know that the event will take place. The reasons for the event may be obvious but, quite often, the decision about how to implement the ritual is so old that the reasons are forgotten. Some kinds of rituals correspond with traditions within the community or with religions life - nativity, Valentines Day, Diwali, Easter, May Day. Wearing uniform can be part of ritualised behaviour. Saluting the flag at the start of the school day or standing up to mark the entrance of a teacher are usually habitualised rituals.

Habitas

Unlike rituals, habitas (or 'habits') is to do with repetitive actions which have no particular symbolic significance or linkage. The concept applies to activities which are frequent but which are not to be subject to any discussion or any attempt to make them problematic. This is the way things are, and this way suits us well enough.

As teachers, we take care of many of our lessons or our duties automatically and become "accustomed" to many procedures and practices without discussion - apart from those situations where something disrupts the habit or changes the conditions for our procedure.

Very often habit is an expression for normative action, that is we act on the basis of some values we hold, although habit can also be frequently based upon myth. The common denominator here is that as teachers, as individuals, we do not require any reason. It is, after all, quite obvious in such and such a manner.

In schools, as well as in society, many habits have changed in the last twenty years. For example, social norms about the use of the 'you' and 'thou' forms of address have shifted. As a consequence, not only have ways of addressing people in school been brought from habit to reflection, but this has also brought inspection of the relations between teachers and students in the everyday life of the school and a shift from a status orientated towards a mere informal and personal style of interaction. Mediation and transformation come together here and one of the ideas related to manipulating praxis to achieve, say, the development of the school as a cultural centre might be to review these 'habits' which prevent generations from developed newly-shared possibilities to enjoy joint experiences. If you want to make changes, it's not enough to have good intentions, you also need new habits; new habits reflect new intentions.

Routines

Routines differ somewhat from habits. Routines encompass accepted procedures and established criteria for how daily life in school is performed - and even, perhaps, for reasons they are done in this way. In many ways, routines can be usefully regarded as cluster of habits or as the productive consequence of habits.

To some extent, routines are more easily brought into consideration through action research dialogue because they are not particularly associated with us, with personal norms or motives. There can be procedures which are prescribed by the bureaucratic teams of an organisation, after agreement, for use in anticipated by less frequent situations or circumstances. The organisation has a procedure, but the person charged with its implementation is not conscious of it as some fixed, recurring event. One does things in a way which has been determined at some point or other in the organisation's existence but - similar to rituals - it is not certain that many can remember the reason for this or see any value in them unless the routine is disturbed. In modem education, a lot of the old routines have changed. The traditional routines with one teacher, one topic, one class and one lesson has, in many schools, given way to team-teaching, interdisciplinary education and thematic feature weeks which include a mixture of different classes of students. Or, in some cases, the ordinary 'lesson-divided' school day has been restructured to allow for the scope and intensity of some working theme. Or, at the same time, methods and materials have changed from proofreading of textbook toward thematic-orientated authentic texts or even self-composed texts.

Myths

We understand myth as referring to the everyday explanations for ways of acting and ways of holding sets of activities together. Such everyday activities are taken-for-granted and often provide the accepted rationale for rituals and habits. The function of the myth is to justify attitudes and actions without any obligation to defend this justification through rational argumentation.

Myths have positive and negative valence. That 'Teachers have a pastoral concern for children' is a powerful myth. So is that "Nice girls don't do Physics".

Myths have various origins. Sometimes they are just curious re-assertations of obligation and rules like when, for instance parents decide about their child's obligation to receive education with the assertation, 'You have to go to school - it's the law'! Of course, we know that in most European systems, parents are allowed, if they wish, to teach children themselves, the only 'obligation' being that the child gets an education comparable with the fixed years of formal schooling. Sometimes myths are rooted in prejudice. We know that within a community we can still find labels like, 'This is a Good school - this is a Bad school'. We know that within a school we will find similar labelling at work - about good and bad classes, teacher or pupils. Usually, their labels have no empirical basis; no-one has made a study or even, maybe, set-out the criteria for the judgment. The everyday explanation suffices. To work actively on myths is to work upon systematic institutional change, since it requires the production of fresh insights (or "counter-myths") and the implementation of new criteria to justify actions in the school.

Activities

Put simply, 'Activities' refers to the everyday behaviour which teachers and pupils choose to enact as a consequence of their *understanding* of the classroom or school conditions. Patterns of communication, patterns for the use of space and resources, patterns of curriculum selection and exploration. In this connection, then, activities are habituated forms of readings of power relations and the role possibilities envisaged through this reading. This does not necessarily mean that a particular teacher or pupil is terrifically anxious about the reactions of those holding power. It can quite simply be an expression of the fact that, as an individual, they cannot imagine or just glimpse an idea can be done in other ways or with other perspectives and understanding. A head is a head is a head. A teacher is a teacher is a teacher. And a pupil is a pupil is a pupil.

Now the key point is that the above list of possible elements of social praxis is only a rough map. It's not a complete picture, just a way into understanding life in a school. Indeed, it is probably true to say that the map can only make sense and can only be useful if it is applied through dialogue. Or, to put it another way, that school praxis can only be explored and modified through dialogue. But why should one attempt such explorations or modifications; why not just leave schools in peace?

Chapter Three

Why not just leave the school in peace?

Interests in Schools

In some important ways, the question in the title of this chapter is a joke, a bit of empty rhetoric. Schools are never left in peace. Educational managers appear to have an infinitely extendible interest in "reforming" schools - in revising the curriculum, the funding and the operations, organisation and objectives of schools. Teachers appear to have a boundless interest in exploring new approaches, in finding more effective ways of getting their work done. Educational researchers appear to have an insatiable appetite for probing, describing, analysing and pointing to new possibilities for schools to try-out.

Interests in Action Research

The question becomes less frivolous if one proclaims a commitment to action research. A different interest is implied. Not just an interest in intervention and innovation. Not just an interest in the validity of descriptions and analysis of school life. Rather, it is interest in blending both of these challenges - in identifying concerns that are *equally* of significance and moment to those in school and those on the outside. Action research demands a steadfast resistance to the temptation of constitute schools as merely objects of research. It demands that researchers work not only with an interest in making innovation but that they also put themselves at the disposition of the main agents of any innovation, those inside schools. Otherwise action research is reduced to the investigation of some parts of a process which is implemented by others.

We feel that as we are advocating *democratic* action research, then the basic question becomes decidedly serious. The interest in blending insiders' and outsiders' views and visions and in building-up working relationships which celebrate partnership is given a sharp edge - an interest in extending dialogue about power-sharing in schools. But this still leaves open the question of motivation; on what might this interest be based?

Why do Action Research in Education?

This headline can be interpreted in at least two ways. It could be re-expressed as 'Why is education an interesting field within which to do research?', or it could be taken to be asking 'Why and how are particular individuals interested in the field?' Let us explore the second version first - the personal motivation.

The three of us who are writing this text have been committed to understanding and developing schools through four different connections; we have been pupils, we have been teachers, we have had children attending schools and we have done research on different layers and areas of school life and, in these four spheres of operation, we have been involved in many different kinds of practice. This might be regarded as our legitimation on the level of common sense. In our research, however, we have come to see the power of another kind of argument.

A 'common sense' commitment to school development, however noble or altruistic is, by definition, personal and individualistic. When we began to do research work together, it soon became self-evident that we would have to find some way of moving beyond 'common sense' and of sharing our perceptions and agreeing some basic targets. Coming from different academic, cultural and research backgrounds (one Danish psychologist, one Danish sociologist and an English teacher educator), this was not just a technical or intellectual problem. It was not enough to agree topics - although we seemed to share an interest in exploring questions about didactical thinking, in the school as an organisation and in the connection between parts of the schooling process. We soon found that it was difficult to agree on what would count as routes to acceptable "answers" to these questions. We lacked a mutually-approved interdisciplinary understanding and research procedure.

Actions not Abstractions

On reflection, it is clear that this personal dilemma, this search for a shared point of view, is exactly the same one that confronts anyone embarking on action research - the dilemma of interpersonal relations within research. As long as there are people in schools, this is not just a concern about intellectual agreements, about research style or paradigms. It is about action. It is about acting in relation to other people. It is about the real consequences for real people of both research acts and of actions based on those acts. Teachers and pupils are people rather than carriers of data. In our work, we have found that we are always coming back to talking about bodies doing research, about teachers and pupils and real people in school rather than the more abstract parts of the debate about research or interventionist principles. This is not in itself a philosophical or theological defence. To be sure, there is always a moralistic commitment in action research because it is to do with deliberately engaging with and exploring real lives. But in our opinion, this commitment comes from a basic assumption about the reality of social life and not from a moral stance.

The unifying feature we found most applicable was democratisation, as both the subject and the means of managing action research. Our own experience of working together upon projects aimed at extending the potential of schooling, reinforced the realisation that in this kind of endeavour, in action research, we confront a stark choice. One can either assume that differences in interest and understanding are relatively unimportant or one can see them as crucial and attempt to manage them; one can attempt partisan action research or democratic action research. For our part, the first option is not fruitful. This is because we believe that if we are going to develop action plans in schools, plans which are of real impact, influence and consequence - then this is only possible by working with other people. And only and almost always this demands through dialectical dialogue. In this recognition, we get the beginning of an answer to the question of 'why not jut leave schools in peace'?. It seems to us that the democratisation process in school is of fundamental interest to action research, in just the same way as it is an appropriate way of developing the research perspective itself - whether this research is done by teachers, or by outsiders, like ourselves. If action research is done without a visible and firm orientation to democratisation, then, clearly, some of the questions raised here will not be pertinent - or maybe the issues involved will be less interesting, less compelling. For instance, the relationship between researchers and other participants, or between researchers themselves, will be mainly a technical problem. In democratic action research such questions become all-pervading; and this is not a burden because, in many ways, a consideration of them raises exactly the same kind of issues, in terms of relationships, as those which govern the interactions between people in their different status position in the education system itself. In both enterprises, the issue is to do with power and it is to do with status and the way it is managed. And that is where action research in education and democratisation come together. In the final analysis, both are concerned with trying to establish new insights, new ways of seeing and understanding the basic social definitions on which practical actions depend.

Managing status

One day, in a school, some teachers raised a couple of queries about their work and then they invited us to help them to explore these questions.

> *"We think it would be a good idea to listen to what the pupils say a bit more carefully and if we tried to take what they say a bit more seriously. Do you have any suggestions about how we might do this?*

This tiny, little question raises a multitude of issues relevant to our concern with power-sharing.

Why is the question important? That's the first issue. Is it an important question for researchers? Can researchers find anything useful in the question? Can they get anywhere near sharing the teachers' understanding of the question? Once you've understood the question, how do you start a search for an answer?

In action research, from the very beginning, one has to try to apply a different perspective in this analysis: why is this question important to teachers? The answer to this is to do with teachers' concerns and researchers' concerns about peoples' educational and social lives - which, in the final analysis, are several steps removed from emergent educational properties like the curriculum or school management or the level and direction of funding. It is to do with everyday, interactional relationships and with how to turn one's vision of what is going to be done into practice. And just from this simple start, we can generate a lot of other pertinent questions which become important research issues:

> *Are we listening to the children?*
>
> *How are we interpreting what we hear?*
>
> *What kind of barriers exist between our intentions and our interactions, between listening and acting?*

This basic question, which actually was the starting-point of a project, is a good case for another reason - the question was put by teachers to someone else, and by exploring this first turn, this first utterance in a dialogue, we can begin to get to grips with the intricate issue of research relations.

Teachers rarely have either the time or the opportunity to raise simple questions like this one as a professional concern. They have so many things to do in their daily activities and so many procedures are self-evident in teaching anyway - according to tradition, to working conditions and cultures, according to here and now strategies of routine life in schools. But researchers can; they have the time and the space to do so. An action researcher and a teacher can quickly agree on the importance of some questions which they both find interesting. But that does not mean that they understand the question in the same manner. They seldom do. They have different backgrounds and they work with different norms within different myths. However, a real point of contact is to exploit these differences. We adults see things differently from children - hence the force of the basic question being discussed here. The researcher and the teacher see things differently as well. But these differences still form the basis for an agreement - an agreement to make different attitudes, experiences and knowledge a vital starting-point for joint projects.

Probably, we will never be able to reach a complete agreement, to share exactly the same understanding and yet we can still have and continue social interaction according to our different interpretations. We don't have to agree on everything, but we might need to know where we fundamentally disagree.

The issue is really to do with finding ways in which schools can respond and react to conflict and differences in a manner which gives space for pupils to express their beliefs and to have them taken seriously. As we have already said, recognising differences does in itself go some way to meeting this challenge. If differences in perception or opinion or interest can be defined as normal and fruitful, then this surely does provide a basis on which the partners in any project can gradually negotiate certain means and mechanisms for coping with their competing claims, for managing differences.

The visions of the child is the key

This attitude to differences and to agreements blends optimism and respect with responsibility and obligation. It is appropriate, we would suggest, as a basis for both research relationships and those forged through the processes of school life. Children are not adults, nor are they to be treated as such. But they are always to be seen as people, as individuals who have an ever-growing capacity to deal with new situations, and as persons with whom one can negotiate and reach agreements. This vision is not just a picture, a mental construct. For us, it becomes the basis for relationships in the school or the classroom. If we are to keep with this image, then adult-child or teacher-pupil relations have to be shaped in a way which systematically creates space for children - to make reflections and imagine choices and decisions; to extend their capacity for actions and to honour any agreements into which they enter. This process, which is basically a description of democratisation in process, sounds very simple. It prompts a similarly basic question about how such spaces can be created, how the changes implied can be accomplished.

Creating Spaces for the Children

It is, we recognise, one thing to assert that one might like to create new spaces in the classroom for children ('to foster a democratic culture'!), and quite another thing to put this into practice. Where does such an enterprise begin? With curriculum review, with teaching methods, with the internal organisation of the school, with staff relations? There is, in fact, no single answer. The model we are suggesting has to work with an assumption that differences between teachers in a school or between one school staff and another one as real and normal and healthy as those between adults and children. It has to be assumed that, within a school, one group of teachers will champion one set of objectives designed to extend their pupils capacity to make decisions and to reach agreements which conflicts with that promoted by another group. However, rather than see these as obstacles and deficiencies, the position taken in democratic action research is that such differences are synergetic challenges. Democratic development and change has to begin precisely where those involved feel there is a need, for starting the dialogue, it is their choice. But that doesn't mean that we cannot construct a basic framework or design to facilitate such developments.

Action Research Principles. Three Pairs of Concept

In our work, we have come to value and to use three pairs of concepts which we see as fundamental in democratic development. The concept pairs - which are set-out below - apply to many different levels of action research processes. We have used them in analysing the conditions or the context of action research projects. We have also used them as principles through which discussions about the questions addressed in projects and the tools used to explore and to form new plans are managed. And we have used them as a means of handling dialogues about democratic perspectives and school development. The concepts refer equally well to issues of choice and control as to questions of influence and co-influence.

These three pairs of concepts are:

* Freedom of Speech and of Public Opinion - in that either only has real value in terms of the other.

* Resourcefulness and Self-Administration - in that the more resourceful the individual, the more independent and free the collective function can become.

- Individual Development and Collective Development - in that one is dependent on the other.

The six concepts are arranged in pairs, the one part of which concerns the single individual, and the second part of the pair concerns the group or the collective. Let us explore them in more detail.

Freedom of Expression and Publicity (öffentlichkeit)

The first concept-pair are related to the democratic debate, we have called them *Freedom of Speech and Public Opinion and Publicity.*

The person who functions democratically must learn to use his or her freedom of expression. In the school, this means the presentation of one's ideas concerning the work's form and content.

However, there is nothing to be gained from expressing oneself if no one listens, no one to adopt an attitude or put forward their own suggestions. Therefore, 'publicity' must be developed. The teacher is an important part of this publicity. In addition to the presentation and justification of her own considerations, she can ensure that the education is organised to provide scope for individual freedom of expression, public debate and discussion. Here, the 'conception phases' of educational work often play a special role, the reason being that it is here that the democratic debate is particularly lively and necessary.

The participants' comments in the evaluation phase express different evaluations of what has been gained from this work sequence, and of what has been opened in the way of new possibilities. It is thus important that teachers and pupils exercise one another in the public presentation of a retrospective, constructive criticism and self-criticism, and hereby throw light on new proposals. Evaluation is thus made on the premises of the collective, and just as much upon those of an outside authority: this doesn't mean that no reference at all is made to external expectations or demands, but simply, that even this is part of the public agenda.

Resourcefulness and Self-administration

The second pair of concepts - resourcefulness and self-administration - involve efficiency, i.e., the participants' abilities of being able to achieve something without constant outside support. Again there is an individual and a collective aspect. There is not much use in only making decisions - they have to be realised. Independently or in association with others, the individual must learn to administer as great a part of his/her life as possible.

This concept-pair displays its importance particularly in the action phases, where ideas and decisions must be put into practice. The practical implementation depends on the abilities possessed by the participants, or those they are willing to acquire. Democratic capability is something more and other than just the technique displayed at meetings.

Individual and collective Development

The third concept-pair involves the tension between the *individual's and the collective's development.* They are concepts which embrace the two pairs already mentioned, but they contain something more. It is possible for a strong feeling of solidarity and community to be developed within a class. Fellowship is built up on agreements which must take interests and willingness into consideration. Good agreements are not reached without the participants knowing and understanding each other's arguments.

The two concepts are two sides of the same relationship. A restricted individual influence on the fellowship most frequently leads to a hierarchical power structure, also mutually among the pupils. The regard for the individual's and the collective's development will constantly change character, and this manifests itself in the conflicts which are experienced by the participants. Therefore, a precondition for development is that participants examine those differences which are incompatible, and those which can be modified when an agreement is entered into, this agreement making differences public if not reconciled.

Teachers' Work

The work of the professional teacher is, perhaps, best understood as a paradox. On the one hand, a great part of what teachers do - day-by-day, lesson-by-lesson, minute-by-minute - is largely built upon routine, upon well-established, tried and tested habituated practices which are based on past experience and previously determined decisions and agreements. It is custom. Sometimes, however, and for some teachers more frequently than others, something disturbs these routines, this *praxis*. It might be anything: a change of national or local school policy, a chance remark by a pupil or, quite simply, the emergence of a new feeling, attitude or ambition on the part of the teacher.

Pupils' Work

Though often complementary pupils' work is not the same as teachers' work. From the start of their school career, pupils take the initiative as they react to the praxis managed by the teacher. Children send a lot of personally significant messages and utterances into the classroom and the practised teacher has, to some degree, to respond - either by intervening, ignoring, listening or even answering or developing the dialogue. Hidden curriculum theorists suggest that this work, in the main, is characterised by a slow but effective process of routinisation. The teacher's communicative acts and initiatives lead to two types of modelling of pupils' behaviour. The pupils both radically diminish their verbal initiatives and they learn, as a general rule, to listen and to wait for tasks to be given to them by the teacher. And the tasks will be a reflection of the teacher's professional praxis and sense of priorities - built on her embedded skills, her strategic solutions for planning activities, giving information, for using aids like work sheets, for giving unambiguous instructions - skills which make strong claims for a necessary routine for both educational workers - pupils and teachers. Of course, routine is necessary and unavoidable. It would be impossible to begin every meeting in a school with some kind of negotiation. But routine is also something to work upon.

However, the skilled teacher is fairly well-aware that she would find it difficult to achieve complete control of life in the classroom, either through routine strategies or through advanced planning; she will know that it is almost impossible to exactly replicate a previously given lesson or even implement advance plans with any degree of certainty. The unpredictability of so many of the real circumstances of classroom life makes total routinisation impossible and teachers' control of their own and their pupils' work insecure and inexact.

Faced with this paradox, the teacher can weigh the advantages and disadvantages of two general strategic responses. Either, she can invest more effort and energy in attempting to enhance her control through close attention to the details of her methods of instruction, work styles and teaching materials. She can attempt to impose her planning rationale more powerfully. Or, she can work at establishing a more differentiated network in the classroom - one which relies upon and enables the sharing of ideas, negotiation, reflectivity, arguments, co-influence and which depends upon agreements being made with students. She can either accept or she can work upon the irrationalities of the planning rationale.

Let us turn, now, to how action research can support those teachers who are seeking the second pathway and attempting to change praxis.

Chapter four

How to create a more democratic Lifestyle?

Basic Assuptions

It is possible and useful to find some traits, some trends in the social organisation of life and work in school which can foster conditions for a more equitable distribution of power or which, at least, secure over time that power-sharing becomes a custom. Differences are managed by blurring the status boundaries which govern relations between groups and individuals as well as by a sharing of influence and privilege.

One of the more puzzling experiences we sometimes get in our action research work and in our involvement with in-service education for teachers is the distance we find between dreams and accomplishments. Although you can often find a wish to move towards a more democratic lifestyle in modern schools, you will find examples of where this ambition is even partially realised few and far between. You will, of course, frequently find the 'wish' expressed in celebratory rhetoric on Speech Days and public occasions or in staff meetings and open discussion. It is not even that difficult to find individual teachers who really do ask themselves questions like the following.

> *"How can I give children a more positive life-experience in my classroom"?*
>
> *"How can I give them responsibility for their plans and their actions and, by discussing their imagined possibilities, involve them in designing and evaluating their work"?*

Much more seldom do you find a group of teachers who have developed a common practice, together with their pupils or with their teachers, - common in the sense of embracing a shared responsibility for educational content, style and evaluation.

This might seem as if we are blaming teachers for a failure to innovate. Quite the opposite. Our intention is to draw attention to the fact that many of the necessary conditions for democratisation are already in place in schools. Furthermore, both of these traits are not idealised or romantic hopes, but derive from the essential nature of schooling as it already is. Schools cannot avoid the issue of dealing with things which disturb routine and invite change; and teachers cannot avoid the question of how much influence they will exert. Similarly, schools cannot escape their function as agencies of cultural reproduction and cultural production; and teachers cannot realistically escape the duality of their role as both agents of cultural transmission and as potential innovations. To recognise this is important. It underpins a basic justification we would support for interfering in schools - to support teachers in their unavoidable tasks of dealing with ideas about their educational ends and means which break into their established routines and, at one and the same time, of developing ways of enriching the educational experiences of each of their pupils. Both of these tasks, as we have already argued, involve struggles; struggles to manage differences in vision, definition and prescription.

Supporting Teachers' Ambitions

We could support such struggles by taking sides, by producing our own clever suggestions for change and enrichment - suggestions based on our own very good action research and which are powerful enough to wipe out opposite views. Or, we can support such struggles by working to strengthen the mechanisms in schools through which these inevitable contests are conducted in dialogues which manage differences through negotiated agreements. In short, our work as action researchers can be fundamentally concerned with supporting teachers in their efforts to extend their capacity and capability for democratic change. And that is our original, private legitimation.

Our working definition of democratisation demands a rather sharper focus on the problem of power. In our understanding, the democratisation of schools and of educational processes minimally involves a re-shaping and reform of the conditions which help those involved to experience meaningful co-influence on their own situation and on the collective endeavour, the joint practice of a group of participants. One of our aims, therefore, is to develop the *insights*, the *means* and the *tools* which make changes in the distribution of power, influence and privilege more *accessible* to the participants. And it follows that these developments have to be made together with the participants.

They are to do with their situation, their power economies, their individual and group endeavours, their choices.

Power-sharing

But when the issue is choice, how can the differences which will inevitably arise from conflicts of interest or from competing perspectives be managed? Recognising and respecting differences of interest and ambition is the subject of a democratisation process. The object of the process is power-sharing, the fundamental and most difficult issue.

To untangle this issue, we need to make a re-consideration of how schools are perceived as being implicated in the reproduction of social inequalities or are themselves directly responsible for creating inequalities of experience and treatment. The actual expressions of inequality or of problems about power distribution which have provoked research, experimentation and innovation in educational projects are many. Each project centres upon its own evaluation of in which aspect inequality is most vexatious. Inequality based on age-differentiation in the adult-child/teacher-pupil relationship, inequality based on how schooling responds to cultural, class or community differences; inequality based on ethnic or gender differentiation and inequalities which spring from the ideological manipulation of the less powerful by those who wield power. If we look carefully at these projects, it is indeed possible to discover some good explanations of the nature of inequality in education and of the apparently strong resistance to efforts to reduce it, resistance in both educational institutions and in the social formation outside the school. Our attitude to inequality, however, tries to put the basic questions another way round. In doing this we concentrate on the identification of those conditions which work for equality, which may nurture a more democratic lifestyle in school and open-up the traditions, norms, routines and customs of school for the necessary changes which reflect a democratic approach.

Some conditions for Equality

If a group wants to work towards equality certain conditions must be met. This is not to do with strong leadership or with a threat from an agency outside of the group. One essential requirement is the need to establish some sort of frame of common reference. It is more effective and certainly easier to work towards establishing such a frame by concentrating on creating a *common memory* rather than clear cut rules. A common memory provides individuals in the group with two opportunities:

- the opportunity to inspect one's ideas and possible contributions in the light of the wider, common situation and history, and,
- the opportunity to have readily available an updated, overall impression of the 'shared field' of action and practice, and, by implication, a feeling of knowing the approach and the norms of the group through practical experience.

In building-up a common memory, we can begin to share our interests within both practical and emancipatory fields as well as begin to move towards a deeper understanding of our own and of other's position. In short, we develop a 'sociological imagination' in which possibilities and constraints are linked.

Phases in Group Work

We realise that people involved in group activities have different interests and obligations when they join together in either action research and educational innovation as a common endeavour. That is why it becomes important to establish a common memory from the very outset - to make the different conditions, expectations and imagined possibilities explicit. This pathway leading to a public sharing of knowledge, a sharing of the diversity in the parties' interests, needs and resources. In our research work, when asked for support, we have tended to fix the agenda along the following lines. A first task is:

Analysing

Establishing a dialogue between the researchers and the teacher groups. This allows us to go onto

Planning

Elaborating the dialogue by planning the tools for 'mutual publicity' and individual influence on the problems of the staff. The agenda can then move to

Action

To assisting and supporting pedagogical initiatives and daily life. Evaluation is not a special phase in itself, but rather, it is a necessary condition of all three of the above.

The rationale

The rationale from which this Analysis-Planning-Action phasing is derived, contains two basic assumptions:

1. Adult participants in school innovation or democratization projects can benefit from *experience* of the problems of democratization as *existential* questions before they can effectively work on these problems in teaching-learning situations.

2. In action-research on democratization, it is fundamentally contradictory to implant theoretical understandings about teacher behaviour and possible innovations *before* either of these can be firmly attached to the *themes* or *issues* already given high priority by the staff group itself and the individuals who make-up the group.

Bad Tools for good Intentions

Democratic action research has to be experiential and in that sense, its focus from the outset has to be the local problems of the people for and with whom it is undertaken. Too often, action research can become research on action and thus becomes reduced to an attempt by outsiders to implant their perspectives on others - as some feminist or socialist or anti-racist commitments have done. Action is disconnected from research, and vice versa.

The strategy of establishing a shared memory through which members of a group can begin to interpret aspects of their reality is very useful here - and has many advantages over starting with a presentation of research issues or possibilities or with an attempt at a clarification of attitudes and norms as such. To be a member of a group does not necessarily (or usually) lead to easy compromise and the harmonisation of action. The concept of democratization asks for commitment to group activity, to an honest attempt at building-up of trust, this feeling of solidarity towards the group, is to focus not upon the compromises, the harmony, but through an empathetic understanding of individuals' different definitions and desires. In a nutshell, this strategy can be expressed as a chain of experiences:

reflection - action - new relations.

Giving away Priviliges

In many ways, the position and work of researchers in action research are privileged - more so in some countries than in others. One such privilege is that researchers have time of investigation and analysis and a legitimate interest and obligation to describe and provide accounts of the situations and conditions of other people.

When action research is linked to educational development through a democratic perspective, it becomes incumbent upon the researchers to reduce these privileges, to give some of them away. Traditionally, this is done through the process in which researchers hand over (and encourage the development) of their theoretical tools and methods. But it is not only a question about tools and methods. It's about giving away the monopoly of defining research priorities, the perspective privilege.

An *Exchange* of *insights* and *understanding* is a requisite of a joint venture like democratic action research - a movement from being different parts of a venture to becoming members of a growing partnership.

Obstacles to Democratisation

It is easy to proclaim and pay lip-service to the partnership ideal. It's not so easy to create new cultures of partnership, cultures which give new shape to research and to educational relationships and operations. Certain obstacles stand in the way.

The radical educational critiques and the school-based pedagogical discussions of the 1970s and early 1980s - about the nature of inequalities in schools, the operations of the hidden curriculum and about emancipatory instructional strategies - seem, on the wide canvas, to have contributed to the achievement of at least one important transformation in the culture of schooling. This is perhaps best summarised as the establishment of a much more informal and gentle style of teacher-pupil interaction in the classroom, and, consequently, a movement away from one of the traditional authoritarian rules and methods of classroom management. Social relations in schools to-day are decidedly warmer than they were in the past and it is sometimes assumed that schools have, therefore, become democratic. But this assumption is misleading. In only a few schools is it possible to find an example of where the question of how the school is run has been made a collective concern. To be sure, one can find some (mostly smaller) schools with a kind of individualistic educational focus - where the single child is given space and an opportunity to influence their own work as a pupil. But often, even in these schools, the charismatic teaching style is maintained, i.e., a reliance on a teacher initiated agenda and upon a teachers competence to work at the hard task of motivating the learner. And this exposes one of the more obvious obstacles to work on in an attempt to develop the democratisation of schools. The change in everyday school practice is delayed, is fossilised, by the shortage in the establishment of new myths, rituals, reasoning, customs and working norms which could replace the old, well-known educational culture.

Chapter five

Making Classroom Practice a Theme?

The teacher is an agent of Change

The sediment of the rituals, routines, myths, habits and activities in a classroom, then is a *praxis*. But let us say straight away that the image of the 'sedimentation' or 'habituation' can be distorting. If we collate these concepts or features of praxis with the pairs of concepts which, as we have already explained in Chapter 2 is a basic assumption and technique for democratic action research, we can begin to consider the real power of the concept. We can observe that:

- praxis is both predictable and fluid or dynamic.

In the sense that praxis is the bedrock of everyday affairs in schools, much of it is habitualised and regular. In the sense that praxis is an expression of subjective interpretations which express and give direction to teachers' and students' sense of what they are about in school, it is open to fresh interpretations.

- praxis is energised by power-holders and power subjects.

Much of what is routine in school is the outcome of previous negotiations between individuals who stand in different positions of the micro-power structure of the school. In recognising this, we gain some purchase on where power actually resides and how it operates.

- praxis is individualistic and collectivistic.

Praxis represents the setting where local interpretations of how to make schooling happen and those rooted in the

> *conditions of wider cultures and communities collide and get negotiated. In this sense, praxis is at the centre of the working ideologies of schooling.*
>
> *- praxis is both limiting and limit-transgressive.*
>
> *On the one hand, it is the daily processes through which cultures, ideologies and norms are handed-over. Praxis makes it possible for individuals and groups in school to keep themselves informed about their basic purposes - without constantly having to ask themselves, 'Who am I and where am I heading'? On the other hand, it is also the point for cultural creation and renewal. If traditions are expressed through praxis, this is also the point at which new contents, new possibilities and new operations can be put into place - through breaking existing routines and habits.*

The concept of praxis articulated above might seem to place most weight on the limiting side of everyday life in school, as the reality, and less weight on cultural creation and production, as the possibility. An investigation of praxis certainly does indicate what could stand in the way of cultural renewal or educational reform. But it also indicates the importance of the processes of cultural mediation in schools - processes which give classrooms shape, purpose and cohesion.

From this basic recognition of the teacher as a mediator of praxis - as the essential agent in both the reproduction and production of classroom cultures - we can begin to establish three important methodological principles for democratic action research.

1. Strategic Questions

> *It is from praxis that strategic questions and concerns for action (and, hence, for research) arise.*
>
> *Their actuality is in praxis.*
>
> *But how is this so?*

An action-researcher and a teacher can initiate a research project by agreeing that certain questions are interesting. But, as mentioned earlier, they will not approach the questions in the same way - they have different backgrounds and different myths. Of course, they can accept that they are never going to reach a shared agreement and work with that. But that makes dialogue difficult and less fruitful.

An action-researcher and a teacher can also start with a notion that they have one level of shared agreement, that cultural mediation and production takes place inside established praxis. The issue then becomes one of getting new pictures, fresh imaginations of this operation. But how do we generate these. The key here is that to reflect or analyse praxis is, normally, only interesting if you are working together with someone else. Teachers' own personal, practical and strategic concerns - how they can solve their problems - are important to them, but, in the sense that these concerns are themselves locked into praxis or into teachers' cognitive understandings, are pretty inaccessible if left simply at a level of personal concerns. It is only when, through dialogue, these concerns are pitched against the praxis that they become accessible and actionable.

2. Rude Questions about Praxis provide a Basis for Action

Educational development needs a stronger catalyst than the energy for change produced by the outcomes of a *single* teachers' reflective consciousness. Many teachers, therefore, spend a lot of time in reflective partnership. In the same way, the partnership between the researcher and the teacher is synergetic *not* in terms of the researcher providing the 'good' questions, the 'fuller explanations' or the 'more adequate' visions of development. It is, in fact, the opposite. Only through having someone celebrate the 'outsider' role, the 'alien' perspective with the explicit intention of asking rude questions about the reality being realised in the praxis of the school, can real progress be made.

In most of our experience, teachers do not really start their own evaluations or innovations of big visions or grand dreams of educational development.

They have tended to start with local concerns. How can I integrate children from different ethnic backgrounds? How can I motivate this group? What can I do to make Topic work more interesting? How can I make my job more interesting?

All of these local questions can be met with local answers. You can try this or that. You can try to integrate children by using their language, their culture. You can try 'Horses' as a topic instead of 'Lakes'. You can try to do more practical work. And so on.

In all local questions there is also another more basic inquiry and this is, for the teacher, 'How do I justify my strategies, my educational plans'? This means that in action research we have to find some way of working with teachers to maintain and to support self-conscious reflectivity. We do, of course, take the 'local' questions seriously. But we can also, as 'strangers' with respect to these questions, suggest different angles from which they can be explored. And, basically, it is by inspecting praxis rather than by 'brainstorming' that this is possible. But how to inspect praxis and connect with local concerns?

Let us return to the project in which some teachers did select as their point of departure a question somewhere between a local concern and a full-scale critical exploration of their own praxis. It is this: *"How can we listen to our children more carefully"?*

And from this they began to develop a series of more interesting and more probing questions. The first was, 'How should we decide on the themes for Topic work, next term'? The second was, 'And how will the children react to these ideas - can we take their opinions into account'? The next was, 'Isn't it the case that doing this, actually listening to the children and acting on their suggestions, we solve our own teaching problems? Problems of motivation, relationships and of providing materials?'

Now, there are two points to this story. First, that whilst the teachers eventually come to be actively interested and involved with a commitment to equalising participatory power, they didn't start there. Second, they arrived at this point through a consideration of a rude question about their own praxis set against their own practical concerns. Questions about how and why they qualified topic work, and why they made curricular decisions, about how and why they implemented curriculum plans and about how and why they listened to each other. These questions are interesting to researchers, but initially not so interesting to teachers. It is better to have rude questions of reality as a starting-point rather than sophisticated ones. Reality is reconstructed by rude questions being directed towards the praxis of the school.

3. The Etiquette of rude Questions

Case story

The polite visitors from another country sat and listened to the Minister talking about the Education System in his country. He knew his visitors were keen to know how the system he managed was developing, was being seen as progressive. *"There is change"*, he said, *"but it is slow because our teachers are not that imaginative, that creative"*. Politely, one of the visitors put a question in response to this. *"Could you tell us"*, she asked, *"how your teachers could be more imaginative and more creative without having more influence"?* The Minister gulped. *"That's a rude question"*, he said.

The Minister could have avoided the request for a fully-fledged answer; but he could not avoid the 'basic' question. Visitors can ask questions and look for answers which would be impolite if put by local inhabitants.

As a guest, as an outsider, you can politely ask questions which "go to the bone". These questions are 'rude' in the sense that they delve into issues not normally explored according to the etiquette of a particular group or community. Rude questions have, however, a polite force.

4. Through Praxis we take Teachers seriously

In action research, access to teacher's worlds and concerns is usually taken to be a problem. A common solution is to shape research so that, somehow, the researcher gets an understanding of the teachers praxis and then uses this understanding as a platform for the introduction of 'better' curriculum or management structures and provisions.

An inspection of praxis, however, has other more secure advantages. Access problems are made less problematic when this analysis of praxis is not a mission for the researcher to become like the teacher but rather a base from which (a) the teachers' relative power is revealed and (b) the teachers' questions are given a wider reference to strategic conditions and circumstance. In other words, the teachers questions are both taken and *made serious.*

But *it is not only a question of culture.* Teachers are the driving forces in pedagogical development, just as they can also obstruct innovation. The obstacles which teachers come up against in the school are often of the kind which they themselves can work actively to avoid. Quite a few of these obstacles are, in fact, created by the teachers. For example, they determine many of the parameters which pertain to the social life of a class. By recognising that many of the framework and rules embedded in praxis are actually the teacher's responsibility, not merely as a role or a position but also as a person, make it possible for new and wider parameters to emerge.

Exploring praxis is one method by which didactic discussion can be sharpened. A teacher must be able to argue in favour of her justification of a teaching situation. If she cannot, then the teaching situation must be changed so that it can be understood (and preferably understood as a legitimate by those others in the discussion). A usable procedure here will often be for the teachers to examine their own place in the life of the school - their working conditions, their decision - making processes, their theoretical understandings, their behaviour in school and in the classroom. Their own praxis as a group of teachers.

Facilitating Dialogue between Teachers and Researchers

To try and shape the conditions for a dialogue is only worthwhile if all parties in it can benefit from it. We might assume that as researchers "choose" to talk to teachers they accept that this will be beneficial for them. However, let us just talk about teachers, for the moment.

The conditions for a good dialogue with researchers, from the teachers' point of view, is that they share some interests, can grasp some common topic and that they stand to benefit from the amazing diversity amongst human beings.

Optimistically, we can argue that empathetic and qualified dialogue can lead to increased mutual understanding, to dialectical insight and, practically to fruitful negotiations and agreements. But one of the conditions for sharing power with others - which is what empathetic dialogues are all about - is that participants can trust such an attempt. Therefore, we propose that two premises should be made:

The first is that 'common practice' can be discussed and evaluated and that, through this dialogue partners can relate local concerns, like classroom issues, to constructive experiences outside the setting. This means that the partners have access to a *common language* or *meta-language*. It also, thereby, implies that teacher partners have the opportunity as *adults* to participate as people, not only as "instructors" in school. And, in fact, this in turn raises a whole series of claims related to the social organisation of the school as an institution and the way "teachers" are seen within it.

The second premise is on behalf of the children, directly or indirectly implicated in our dialogues. It seems self-evident that dialogues about their situations have to give some kind of admittance to them to express themselves. And, as with adult partners, to express themselves not just in rationalistic, analytical discourse forms. The privilege of free expression forces us to raise expectations about the *relevance* and *commitment* of exchanges, about honest and emotionally committed participation. The pay-off of this kind of dialogue is fruitful commitment.

Relationships and dialogues based on the above set of assumptions are not given by nature. They are the result of a long process and conscious effort. Sometimes, we have found, they are also a result of bitter struggles over changing school cultures. It is, therefore, important to consider the premises as hypotheses of work - which are, admittedly, a sort of concrete utopia - but which are also based upon work experiences and analyses of schools where some of these theses actually function.

Quite a lot of educational research has provided a long list of conditions in school which counteract or block democratisation. What we are trying to do is to identify some premises for building strategies which work in the opposite direction. The claims are set up as tools for qualifying the theoretical discussion. They make it possible to invent new opportunities and thereby adding to the qualification we have with respect to changing the traditional social order in our schools.

Building-up confidence

Confidence in action research dialogues is closely related to questions of relationships, access to insights and of power distribution. But how can confidence be practically supported? Usually, it is an important part of research to collect, categorise and evaluate "data". The opportunity to build-up files, and to decide upon the way reality is described and categorised, is the basic foundation of a lasting memory in research dialogues. In building such memories or archives, two important claims are usually pressing:

i *It has to be readable and relevant for the different questions of significance different partners wish to raise.*

This is a key point because decisions about what's important in process and product cannot be separated from power and how it is legitimated in partnerships. (And we wish to distance ourselves from those procedures in which the 'researcher' alone has the position, competence and opportunity to use information stored in an archive).

In action research we try to build up documentary material in such a way that it is very easy for participants, other than researchers, to influence not only what is stored but how it is used.

The most simple way of doing this is to inform and give insight to all partners of the content and character of documents on a regular basis.

ii *It has to be jointly owned.*

It is important to let all partners have the right of veto, and therefore, the obligation to negotiate what is to be published in general and why?

The non-verbal Part of the Dialogue

There are limits to the task of making explanations and lines of action explicit in action research. For example, the values behind a particular position or argumentation can only be explained to a certain degree. Quite a large part of a dialogue happens in silence, in non-verbal communication. This is important, because as a person you often have to extend your talent to get more experienced and qualified in understanding these significant silences. Put simply, this involves working at understanding not only the verbal points of a dialogue so as not to miss the experience of bodily expressions and the music and art of the non-verbal.

There are no set rules here. In dialogue, it is not usually necessary to announce a moral position - it is easier to define or describe a moral stance in terms of its opposite or its absence. For us, this means that, to get just a glimpse or flicker of insight into another partners' values and attitudes (the methodology of their methods) is often best caught in situations where they are called upon to resist or to react to what they hear.

There is, then, a layer of people's basic assumptions which are not performed - and maybe, for the purpose of a partnership - they need not always be. Really, it is a question of being sensitive to emotions being expressed in non-verbal communication, of relying on impressions; imperfect though this might appear, not to attend to these emotions invalidates the partnership project. A lot of our emotional stances are formed in early stages of our lives and they are very important for us human beings. The problem in society and in action research dialogues is that one needs some grasp of explanation and explicitness, but only *some*; it is never complete.

Chapter six

Who owns and runs this business?

Contracts and Games Between Teachers and Researchers

Actions research brings people together, and it does so in an attempt to change peoples lives. This being so, it means that crises, conflicts and struggles between those involved - between researchers and teachers, between teachers and pupils, between research groups and other parties - are inevitable. It should not be surprising, therefore, that a great deal of the time given to the project will be used for making contracts - about aims and procedures. By contracts, we don't mean only the written deals and agreements with which those involved work. Many of the most important dimensions in a partnership or a group enterprise are never written or even verbally expressed.

The agreements which will regulate participants actions and inter-changes are mostly of a meta-communicative character, a kind of hidden curriculum for the business-in-hand - we could call them a set of mutual norms - and these derive from all the many, different contexts and social settings from which those who make-up the group draw experience. A team embarking on action research, them, will have to discover ways of gradually weaving a web of agreements which holds together the interests and methods appropriate to the group project and those seen as significant by individual members. One can do this by being prepared for conflict!

Procedures or Principles?

But we should not assume that this is easy, a simple matter of burying differences about action priorities or research procedures under artificial assumptions about the greater wisdom or strength of the group over that of individual members of the team. Although conflict is an inevitable part of the action research process, it is possible in first meetings of project teams to work in a way which 'assumes' a common or shared agenda.

In theory, this requirement to expect conflict can be treated as either an issue of procedure or one of principle. It is entirely possible to try to put down procedural rules about working together in a team in advance - to produce for a group or to give a set of regulations about how meetings will work, how group decisions will be taken and to control participation. However, in our experience, too heavy a concentration on tactical ploys, on 'instruments of government', works against democratisation. It is true that, in the democratisation of educational action research, we have tried to insist on the value of working with concepts of increased publicity in projects and of access to freedom of expression at all stages of a programme, both of which concepts can feature in advanced tactical planning. On the other hand, actual negotiations about team-building in a project will, in our experience, always benefit when tactical manoeuvres and clever power games don't play a prominent part. If they do, if they take-over, instead of achieving educational and pedagogical innovation, one ends up with a series of games, with the creation of wonderful chess competitions.

But why should this be so? Mainly because such attempts to establish formal 'democratic' ground-rules as a procedural precursor for action research are based on two kinds of false assumptions. First, they assume that the general nature of the conflicts and struggles that will emerge can somehow be known in advance and could, therefore, be contained by some managerial trick - that the majority view will prevail or that an appeal can be made to 'export' members of the group. This is almost never the case. The serious crises which occur in action research are almost always ones in which certain individuals in the team feel that their personal parameters, their deeply-held convictions or priorities are being over-ridden or trampled upon by decisions or opinions being adopted by the project group. Predetermined rules don't apply here. Second, and more importantly, the 'tactician' approach we are discussing here seems to assume that the differences which give rise to disagreements and struggles are somehow unimportant or unhealthy. In fact, the reverse is true. People who come together in action research and education innovation projects have seriously different interests and obligations; they also operate in different conditions, through different imaginations and with different expectations. They bring with them different insights into the projects and different resources for realising their visions. In short, they have different reasons for being involved and will give priority to different questions and concerns. Conflict in action research, then, is really about power relations and power struggles over the right and the opportunity to influence the business of the project.

Individual or Group Development

When we began to articulate a personal methodology of democratic action research, in the early stages of our discussions, we did find the tactical approach to power relations somewhat beguiling. We had long discussions about the models we might use to establish democratic team-work between teachers and researchers, models which would somehow solve the problems of power difference which might be anticipated. The mistake we made in these discussions was to suppose that if you could produce organisational networks or plans which provided participants with equality of access and input to the work of the project - or agendas which raised clever questions about who held influence and on what basis this power was defended - power problems would somehow disappear. But these are not problems which can be solved by formal, organisational agreements. In action research, the relational situation is always a double one. It's not just a question of researchers having one set of privileges and responsibilities and teachers having another; or a question of teachers having certain legitimate authority and pupils have some other. In collaborative research and in educational innovation it is a question of individual *and* group development, a question of what one can exchange. Sophisticated organisational models for action research relationships tend to concentrate on the group, on the exchange part of the equation and neglect that of individual development. It is simply not enough to facilitate equality of participation in group activities unless this is accompanied by a matched increase in individual member's knowledge of their own circumstances, their own resources, their own capabilities and of their potential to utilise this knowledge in their own social activities. Loss of this kind of knowledge makes people more powerless rather than more powerful, and that is why, in action research it is essential, from the very beginning, to avoid tactical manoeuvres which, by their nature, will always reflect the point of view of certain powerful parts of a group rather than the diversity of opinion held amongst the many. As an alternative to this, making the differences useful and valid certainly does require the development of some specific norms which allow for a real recognition of differences in experience, knowledge, feelings and power.

But how is this done in a practical way?

Questions of Insight and Power

An obvious starting-point for a more concrete exploration of the ethical and methodological issues introduced in the previous section is to think about the practical problem of managing meetings between researchers and teachers. Such occasions are encounters between unequal parties. In several ways, the position and work of researchers can be regarded as privileged. They have more time and better resources for investigation and for analysis and they have a quasi-legitimate role to describe the conditions and situations of other peoples' activities. They are also more than likely to be in a position in which their supposedly greater theoretical knowledge and experience can be used to support some degree of differentiation of prestige and influence. This is true even though, at least at the start of a project, the actual knowledge a researcher has about the situation in a school or a classroom is presumably less than that of the teachers involved. When researchers and teachers come together, they do not do so in positions of parallel power.

In research, we feel it is necessary to accept these inequalities and to try to work with them - by reducing the researchers' privileges and status claims. This can be done in various ways. One possibility, popular in a great deal of action research, is that it can be done when researchers hand-over their theoretical and methodological tools and, in the process of doing this, develop 'shared' instruments of research. But it's not only a question of tools and methods. An exchange of insights and understandings between the parts or parties involved is necessary in any joint venture, an exchange in which individuals move from being different parts to become members of a partnership. This is a crucial first step of democratic project work - management of the conceptualisation of the business.

Through our own experience, we have come to realise the tremendous range and power of the different interests and obligations people bring to projects in which action research and educational innovation start as a common process. This is why it is always important to make explicit the different conditions, imaginings and expectations of the parties involved as well. This early exchange of thoughts and visions can certainly make public to the participants all kinds of personal concerns and hopes usually kept private; at the very least, it can provide a sharing of knowledge of the diversity in the participants interests, needs and resources. But it can do more than this. The very act of establishing this kind of publicity also models a procedure - a procedure by which persons with different privileges, rights and obligations can *legitimise* their own and other peoples personal concerns in a search for action questions which are mutually relevant and significant.

Fixing the Agenda

In our own research work, when invited to work with teachers, we have tended to fix the agendas along the following lines to create the conditions for this exchange of insight and power in early meetings.

Sharing Informations

Projects begin with information sharing rather than with goal formulation. Democratic action research deals with creating room and space for diversity, intimacy and personal integrity. It is contradictory for researchers to implant theoretical understandings about the behaviour of the teachers they work with and of how this can be developed before such perspectives can be attached to items already given a high priority by the teachers themselves. It is also contradictory if a group of teachers are suspicious about the contribution researchers can make, if they secretly believe, for example, that analysis or theoretical reasoning is a waste of time. To generate a mutually-understood concrete utopia, a practical vision, toward which all those involved can make a reasonable commitment, both parties will have to resist the familiar temptation in action research to find apparently 'easy' solutions.

Researchers can be tempted to push the project on prematurely, to give lesson instead of listening, to innovate rather than building an understanding of teachers' everyday wishes and requirements in relation to their views of how their school works, is managed, is located in a culture; in these circumstances, teachers usually choose either to be 'good' students and follow their 'leaders' (and the project will be theory-bound) or they pay lip-service to the input of the researchers whilst continuing to act as they always have done. The teachers, for their part, have to resist the temptation of most professional practitioners, namely - to reduce identified problems to just technical, manageable solutions. Right now, and just so! If educational innovation and democratisation really are just technical problem then perhaps they would have been solved a long time ago. Unless both researchers and teachers are prepared to convert personal experiences and concerns to public problems through dialogue - and to transform problem-raising into analytical explorations of the reality in which the problems arise - a common project may be driven by a good deal of pioneering spirit, but rarely corrected and refined by a diversity of reasoning, criticism and reflective hesitation.

If the dialectic in a project suffers from either too much analysis or too much activism, both researchers and teachers usually end-up with the same sad conclusion:

> *"Theory and practice do not go together".*

Establishing Agreement

A precondition for working towards change in action research is that groups use the information on the conditions and interests of those involved. In the initial phase of their activities they collect this informations as a basis for establishing an agreement to undertake conscious work on how power and influence is held and expressed in the group and on how this can be made visible or transparent. This is a voyage of discovery. Exchanging insights and understandings with a view to building a clearer picture of how power relations work is genuinely creative. The basis for existing power relations is almost always brought into question in the process of these information exchanges and new structures and rationales - acceptable to the group, according to its new knowledge - are forged out of necessity.

Who owns the Tools and Procedures in Research?

Conflicts and struggles are not restricted to the conception phase of action research projects. The differences in interest and capability which give rise to them at the start of a project remain and even after a project begins to run, fresh crises will emerge. Individuals will want to champion and use their personally cherished versions of how best to implement or refine a group decision or plan. The issue, however, also continues to be a question of how these conflicts can be exploited, of how differences in talent and attitude can be caught and explored in a way which continues to enhance and extend individual and group opportunity.

No *one* person own the tools and procedures. However, sharing them cannot be achieved through edict - however well-intentioned. As with questions of establishing the initial, basic insights and understandings, it can be unhelpful to try to determine in advance the specific ways in which individual skills and schemes can be fruitfully exploited in a joint enterprise, a collective venture. Opportunities for sharing are mostly messy, unexpected and unplanned. But what makes them, at one and the same time, both disturbing and refreshing, is that they always arise when individuals use those tools and inspirations they affirm through group interaction to challenge existing procedures and routines - to raise new questions for the group and to suggest new directions for the common endeavour.

Who owns the Tools and Procedures in Learning?

When the students learn how to get access to the tools and procedures of democratisation, they will not do exactly as the teachers tell them or want. This could sound threatening. However, if pupils only conformed to the existing norms, it would be hard to pretend that they are, in fact, fruitfully developing their own capabilities. This statement is not meant as a call to arms - a cry for more civic courage amongst teachers and researchers or a manifesto supporting the theft of weapons from power-holders which are then used against them as instruments of resistance. The point is that democratic procedures often can be boring and ritualistic if they are not accompanied by creative exploration. Young people in some situations 'play' - unless they have totally forgotten how to do it - and through this they build up newly imagined interpretations of their circumstances and sometimes, even, fruitful avenues to engagement and solutions which we, as cultural mediators, have difficulty in accepting. They have an inventive capacity to draw upon - a capacity which stems from their individuality, their personal impressions and logic - and, quite spontaneously, they often come up with fresh approaches which would take many formal lesson in "democracy" or "collaboration" to teach.

For teachers, this is evidently a rather disappointing experience - disappointing in the sense that the style and cultural routines of children's collective endeavour seems far removed, even disrespectful, of the formal aspects of serious innovatory work. Of course, this is only one side of the developmental coin. Children do need to learn some of the criteria of traditional power-sharing categories (to be given some tools and procedures) - such as the effectiveness of working through representatives instead of relying only upon the parliament of the street. When we make these formal tools and procedures available we are careful not to crush individuality to stifle that creativity which comes from the person and not from the plan. If we consider, for example, how elected student representatives in school councils or meetings struggle to handle their influence or power - and the troubles they have in keeping in touch with those they represent - we usually find that they tend to borrow the parliamentary model of power-distribution through representation, a model assembled by adults. But this is not necessarily something of which we should be proud. Whilst such parliamentary systems do keep the peace, they seldom lead to greatly satisfying innovations and developments; perhaps this working model is built for fully responsible citizens and not for children.

Protection of Rights

The question of ownership of the tools and procedures of democratic action research involves a struggle, an open yet binding contract to secure a double kind of protection. On the one side is the protection of the principles and rights to organise and to discuss freely differences of interest and ambition so that all participants achieve access to powerful agendas; on the other is the protection of the principle of influence, so that possible "lonely riders" in a group - marginalised individuals or factions - can use their inventiveness to progressively monitor, evaluate, re-adjust and even replace the methods and routines of the collective project. How, we might ask, should students and pupils qualify to a degree which brings an increase in the influence they have on their own conditions of work? Maybe we would conclude that we can only offer the tools and insights to explore these conditions - that we give them the tools to communicate and the discipline and inventiveness to keep their reasoning personally relevant. But we should also be sympathetic of their real need to transform both the tools and the culture, sometimes, to stand on their heads.

Power and Ownership

In some ways, our use of the familiar slogan 'who owns and runs this business' as a chapter title, is unfortunate; it suggests a close relationship between ownership and influence. In fact, many important issues about power are not that closely connected with questions on ownership at all. Children don't own that much - although they had been educated and exercised in how to deal with conflict through non-violent strategies and procedures. Headteachers do not own the school or the rules for running it. But they are indisputably the power-holder in terms of their capability to reduce or to enlarge the rights and privileges of the pupils. The strength of children is their knowledge of how to gain access to negotiation, to making deals with power-holders. Researchers have almost no situational power, although they own the right of access to close observation of different kinds of daily life crises in a school, which could later give them a better platform for joining and shaping dialogues with staff and pupils about issues like organisation or pedagogical practices and reforms. We would want to underline a simple contention. This is that both pupils and researchers have influence not because of any resources and rights that they own, but because of their skills. However, we would also suggest that the creative tension between a diversity of individual skills and capabilities and those broader efforts of the whole group can best be managed, be allowed to blossom and flourish, if certain conditions are established.

Taking Teachers seriously

Who owns and runs the business of innovation? Teachers of course! Because although we might frequently depict them as powerless - as caught between the downward pressure of social expectations and the upward force of routine and tradition - are most of them really that much without influence? In a very real sense, teachers control the epicentre of research and innovatory problematic in that they have both the experience and the opportunity to be creative - choosing, through their interactions in the classroom the insights, the strategies, the operations which turn utopian proposals into concrete realities. Teachers often feel they don't have the rights to steer or direct (in research meetings or pedagogical development), just as they often don't believe that their pupils can handle this power. For this reason, from the very beginning of any action research programme, we have to work with the assumption that teachers (or pupils) *can* steer, they can propose and criticise the tools and procedures being used. And this is the nub of initial contracts.

More often than not we continue to come across very many colleagues in mainstream schools who are far more engaged in developing and changing their relationship with children than they are with control or cultural mediation, colleagues for whom it is a rather personal quest to discover or create new tools and procedures for the enrichment of their educational work. Although sometimes articulated in idiosyncratic language, according to their circumstances, a good majority of teachers we meet frequently raise questions about the status and their hopes which go something like the following:

> *"How can I keep both my position as a teacher, as a knowledgeable adult - I have much to teach these students - and yet, at the same time, let them have space for their own ways of developing and further qualifying themselves"?*

> or

> *"What chance do I have? Their ideas are so different. Too many of them are just fascinated with things from the media or whatever. And they lose interest and have too little responsibility when I try to give them free choices or I invite them to participate".*

The hard challenge, here, is with how to progress further than just getting round these schisms. But, instead of analysing the accuracy of these descriptions or debating the possible motives teachers might have for making these kind of pronouncements, for the moment, let us accept the reliability of the experience as described and explore how this experience parallels other "ownership" dilemmas in action research.

Chapter seven

Who owns and runs the Dialogue?

A further Look at Teachers/Researchers Positions

A few years ago, the German researcher, Gstettner, presented an analysis of the interactions between a research team and a school staff. In it, he pointed-out how the researchers, in their meetings with the teachers, steadily and in a very kind way, conquered the whole scene. They set the agenda, took notes, highlighted important issues in discussion, invited a select few of the staff to further develop their contributions, translator other teachers' utterance into concepts from recognised general and academic theory, and so on. At each meeting a researcher had the chair, and through small verbal 'tokens' or discrete sideways glances determined just which insights and inputs were kept in the light and which were relegated to the shadows.

For a long time, the teaching staff did not object. The 'riot', however, finally came when one of the researchers described some crucial details of how the teachers worked objectively quite wrong! And with their indignation, in fact - through it, the teachers introduced their own energies, their own dynamic, into the meeting. But for a long time they held back and not resisted because, as they put it, "it was mostly interesting - or, at least, good schooling".

We can reverse all this, and still protect our personal concerns as responsible adults, as knowledgeable researchers or knowing teachers. In Gstettner's study, the researchers had taken over the business of what we might call the syntactic and strategic management - control over the content of discussion and its influence upon the procedures used for planning an innovation, which the teachers were then expected to carry through. Ironically, the aim of the innovatory scheme was eman[illegible]tion! These *steering rights* can be given away in action research, by researchers to teachers, and by teachers to pupils; the rights to chair, to set agendas, to record, to interpret, to prioritise and to theorise. There are some cruel issues, some dangerous territories to charter here. How can this transfer to privilege be accomplished without those relinquishing influence feeling redundant or cheated and those who receive it feeling deskilled rather than reskilled? We shall address these issues in the rest of this chapter.

Who owns the Discourse?

A popular image of teachers is that their discussions of their own educational work and experience is usually characterised by an absence of theory, by an avoidance of highly-structured, abstract frames of reference. We are not so sure. Our own projects have indicated that teachers who participate seldom start a speech or an interview about their activities or plans with theoretical chains of argumentation or testable hypotheses or similar connections of 'academic' discourse. They simply tell us a story or give us a picture. This is manifestly, however, not because of a lack of verbal knowledge or analytical skill but more, perhaps, because of a custom established amongst practitioners - to promote discourse through testing if others involved scheme the same reality in some way, to establish a shared insight. The next step, after this is established, is to question, to discuss and argue.

If this is the general case, we can usefully ask about that might be fruitful principles according to which the setting and the mode of discourse for negotiations between researchers and teachers as partners get organised. Or, to put it another way - how might we build a social order and a culture of partnership, a culture in which it will be rather difficult to open and run one's own private business?

Education and action research have the common status that they are both public enterprises rather than private businesses. So it is banal to suggest that no one single party owns them. Everyone involved has some rights - and so monopolising tools and procedures is contradictory. Nevertheless, even because this state of affairs is so obvious, certain expectations about how different parties can make different kinds of contribution to the public ventures, come to the forefront.

An elementary contract about our discourse or meta-communicatory rules might look something like this:

Principles

Every participant has the right to learn during the interchange with another, and has something to teach; and every participant has the right to suggest topics for the agenda of project meetings and to express scepticism at such meetings.

Implementation

i *The principles suggest role rotation in the formal part of running the operation - i.e., chairperson, registrar, secretary, information-provider, critic, analyst etc.*

ii *They call for systematic changes between complementary (role distinct) interactions - such as asymmetrical types of exchange like chaired meetings and formal presentations as against symmetrical types of exchange, like open exchanges of attitudes or the swapping of common observations.*

iii *They imply that negotiations are not bound to follow narrow explanatory customs or 'clan' discourse rules - and that it is legitimate to doubt, to be sceptical or even to express strong dissidence.*

Such meta-communicatory contracts can hardly be captured and set as 'holy laws' or strict rules from the start of an action research project. It is most apt that they are, in fact, developed and refined in process, through conscious reflection over discussion, dialogues, doubts and conflict, a process which deliberately nurtures the feeling of an ever-growing common sense of reality. This does not mean, though, that we have no practical ways of making sure these developments do take place.

Case Story:

A Meeting of the Teachers' Council

The staff meeting was slowly working through the agenda. The teachers individual work-loads for the coming year had to be mapped-out so that contracts could be formalised. The council had already decided upon some didactic principles and personal schemes which were related to the decision on workload but which were to be developed in detail after loads had been negotiated. Two action researchers had been given admittance to the meeting.

Finally, something new happened.

Researcher A:

> *"Can I interrupt for a minute? You've already set up some principles sharing your teaching and one of them, as far as I can see, is to make sure that each class is taught by as few teachers above the usual two as possible and that, similarly, individual teachers have as few different class groups as can be managed. But in your work scheme, up to now, you've given one teacher five or six classes to deal with. I feel there's a contraction here".*

A rather shy, soft-spoken teacher smiled apologetically:

> *"It couldn't really be any other way".*

The former chairperson of the council shouted, furiously:

> *"Why do you interrupt? In fact, why are you sharing in this meeting at all? I propose that you don't participate in meetings like this one. The result we have is not so bad, and, really, it's not your problem".*

The teacher with heavy load woke-up and took the schedule: the former chairperson managed to achieve two half days free of teaching by changing lessons with another.

Researcher B:

> *"Okay, naturally we can leave this meeting - the only condition is that you as a staff group change your contract with us. Let us have a break so you can discuss if we are only to have access to some meetings by special agreement. It's not very convenient for us, but ...".*

After a short discussion, the researchers were re-called to the meeting and the Headteacher suggested how the numbers of class-groups in the teacher's concerned workload could be reduced.

This snap-shot deals with the case illustrates at least two different types of conflict - over individual privileges and over the sharing of power - which, in many circumstances, have an unequal division of labour as a consequence. Maybe, if no-one bothered about protecting the weaker partners or was attentive to the search for better solutions to problems, the meeting could have finished much sooner.

The story also illustrates the momentary fights researchers have for legitimacy - and, by implication - their usefulness as partners in developing teachers' work. The Headteacher could, for example, have chosen to make a coalition with the old power-holder of the crew, and the researchers' contract in that project would have been weakened.

No-one gets rid of the problem of power-sharing versus power-games. Even though you may not have the formal position in a situation to justify being labelled as a powerful individual you still may be very influential if you, say, reinstate an engagement with constructive decision-making or insist on keeping the running of the business to the details of previous engagements held in the group's record or common memory-bank.

The analysis of power and influence, therefore, is a necessary but not so simple requirement. The researchers in this case did not have much power as such in the school and even less in the system as a whole. But in a broader sense, they were not powerless. It certainly would have been a loss of face to give up working with this school, but the academic position always would give them other opportunities to preserve status and legitimacy. This is exactly what we mean when we talk about the privileged position of the researcher. In contrast, their influence was already quite strong. It had been established at previous meetings where the analysis of the teachers plans and practices they had provided had been taken up by the staff and used by the teachers to develop their work and to try to find new ways of going about their teaching.

In developing classroom relations, this kind of conflict becomes an even more cruel item, if the pupils get access to problems about the division of labour in school work. However, we have seen many teachers dealing with negotiation about this theme in their classrooms and reaching mutually satisfactory agreements. Naturally, they expect the pupils to behave responsibly and to keep to the deal with honesty and integrity. But if such negotiations really are to be successful - in classrooms or staff rooms - then we always have to come back to sharing insights before we try to share work involvement. A necessary condition to cope with a shared ownership of the division of work is a very high level of shared insight into the *reasons* behind the work - or you will find that all that emerges is a series of "as if" actions by the well intentioned but alleviate participants.

How to establish new and shared Insights

To us, the most critical issue in democratic innovation is about why and how participants in the project get to move from old positions and insights into new experiences. In many action research projects this issue is often dealt with through the deployment of some kind of brainstorming technique, through which a pooling of attitudes and possible ways forward is used to overcome the resistance to change and the invention of new ideas. But it is not that simple - that a new summarising of old experiences and of existing ideas as such shapes new visions and understanding. Present experience often blocks utopian imagination. What is required is not just the production of new ideas but also the creation of a forum for analysis, dialogues and reasoning that has significance for everyone involved. The turning-point in action research is this. It is when the dialogues about what has and is about to happen involves partners who have quite different opportunities, opportunities to qualify meaning and content in the collaborative activity. The importance of sharing files and memories to get to the point is vital.

Building up a mutual memory

It's usually an important part of research that data is collected, categorised and evaluated. The opportunity to build up files and decide the way reality is categorised is the basic foundation of a lasting memory. Two important claims are usually raised in establishing such archives - it has to be readable and relevant for the important questions different parties will raise or find interesting. The decision as to what is important in process and product cannot be separated from power and its legitimation. Sometimes, as we have already said, a researcher can act as if they alone have to position, competence and ease of access to this kind of information store. In action research, we try to build up documentary material in such a way that it is fairly easy for participants other than researchers to influence not only what is to be stored but how it is collected and how it is used. The most simple way of fulfilling this objective is, during the process of establishing the archive, regularly to inform and give explanations to all participants of the content and character of the documentation. It is even more important to let them all have the right of *veto* and, therefore, the obligation to negotiate what is to be published in general, to whom and why? Are we interested in the parties' different interests and do we use these differences in building up a common mutual memory?

Case Story: Getting the Picture: Making the Picture

In a town with a large number of schools, the innovation project had been running for 2-3 years. It was basically about supporting innovation and development in the schools and a good majority of the teachers in the area had been involved, either directly or through participation in study groups or the implementation of smaller schemes concerned with problems and topics the teachers had realised for themselves. Nonetheless, the steering group of the project was becoming increasingly sceptical. At the heart of this was uncertainty about the level of support for the project amongst the teachers: was it enthusiastic or was the work regarded with scepticism by a silent but significant number of them? The research team offered to conduct a small questionnaire designed to enable all the teachers in the municipal area - participants and non-participants- to evaluate the state of affairs in each of their own schools. By implication, the results of the survey were also seen as giving some measure of support or resistance to the project, to the general trust of the innovations being promoted. To determine appropriate items for the questionnaire, key people involved in the project were interviewed and a series of statements about the relevant parameters of the programme was established - which the researchers put into some order, according to the following very basic headlines:

Opportunities for:	**Barriers to:**
Collegiality in the School	Collegiality in the School
Local Management of the School	Local Management of the School
Pedagogical Change	Pedagogical Change

The editing principle was that only those statements which identified individual people or circumstances or which didn't make sense outside the context in which they were produced were left out. The members of the steering group were appalled when they saw the draft questionnaire. It consisted of about 250 statements and they suggested that the researchers should condense the list into about 50 major items for the survey. The crisis started here. The steering group was very anxious about asking the teachers to spend so much of their time on this questionnaire. The researchers refused to cut down the material on the ground that they, as "outsiders", would not be competent to revise the opinion, to re-draw the picture, of the "insiders". A long-lasting discussion ensued. The steering group did manage to re-organise the original list of statements into 2 sets of nearly 100 items each, but the researchers steadfastly vetoed any proposal to rewrite or re-express any of them. They insisted the participants themselves were the right people to be reviewed and how these should be expressed. The steering board was invited to design and produce its own questionnaire material - but declined.

Using the Picture

Every one of the schools involved received the 2 sets of questions to consider and to complete individually at their separate staff meetings. After these had been returned, the research team made a simple count of the responses to produce clusters of items which were seen as of particular interest to different schools. Thus, each school was put in possession of a fairly detailed picture of how the teachers who worked in them both perceived their circumstances and looked for change and development. The problem now became which different themes for further debate and dialogue should be given priority. The steering group was given a summary of the replies made by all the teachers in the municipality - although this was put together in such a way as to preserve the anonymity of individual schools or teachers. Not everyone in the little society was happy. To read, to think, about and to react to this bunch of statements was really hard work - although, interestingly, very few of them were generally rejected as irrelevant references to reality. Then, each school received its own profile of crucial items - the exact complexity of which seemed a direct reflection of just how much consultation and collaborative planning already existed amongst the school staff - which was also challenging. The steering group, however, became more happy and relaxed. The survey indicated that there was no evidence of the existence of a silent majority who were cold-shouldering the project as a whole and that, except for certain common attitudes toward some aspects of educational policy in the town, there were distinct and different problems and possibilities for innovation in each of the schools. And the researchers experienced a sense of achievement. The way they had helped produce and analyse the material proved to be a useful way of giving the "politicians" in the project, the steering board, a clearer idea of the essence of the research strategy and - almost as a spin-off- the board had began to envisage developments and changes which might be proposed.

When is a Disagreement a Conflict?

The Story above is essentially about a fight between the different types of reasoning - that of the researcher and that of the steering group. In building up the project data-base, the steering board members reasoned they had a certain set of needs. One theme was avoiding any steps which might provoke resistance to the general innovation policy. Asking already pressed teachers to spend a lot of time and energy considering a long series of statements they might regard as silly or repetitive might be counter-productive. Also, the board felt a need to protect their own reputation in the community as reasonable and responsible people. The researchers, however, reasoned that they had different but just as important need to demonstrate the validity of their theoretical assumption about protecting access to publicity and thus - at the practical level - about showing that it was possible and preferable to collate teachers' pictures rather than in a simple form to revise or re-express them. Thus, whilst both parties were driven by the same intention to establish a general picture of the project and to keep in touch with the "grass roots", they were in deep conflict about how to do it. They both respected the teachers and their situations, but for the researchers, this disagreement really was basic - it touched upon the question of who owns and runs the insights and understandings on which a project is based? Even when both parties to an action research project have good grounds for adopting a particular stance, a real disagreement can exist about which *interests* are perceived as having precedence. But we would argue that this should not be considered as only a moral or ethical issue; it is methodological and precedence is decided through research principles rather than personal predilections.

The Legitimation of Partnership

Two or more people who come to act together will very seldom do so on equal terms. A starting-point for their interaction, however, could be to see these inequalities, and to act towards them, as legitimate. In fact, in innovative work, difference is a strength - just so long as the basic perspective of such work is understood and is shared by all the partners. Not only are we likely to find fairly massive differences between researchers and teachers - but also between those in a research team or between those in the staff groups. These sets of differences could be associated with either some or all of the following characteristics - their competences, their interests, their perceptions, their feelings and frustrations and their hopes and expectations. But, by co-operation, most of all such differences can be *legitimated* - so that they can be discussed, discovered and developed in a variety and number of ways during a project. In action research, and in the problems mentioned above, there lies an implicit objective which, explicitly expressed, is that the research group render themselves progressively more redundant during the course of a project. In other words, the partnership becomes a process in which the teaching staff work for a qualified autonomy and, as a result of this achieve a new capacity to respond to pressures from outside the school. In this objective we find in action research an analogy between the researcher/teacher and teacher/student relationship.

How are we partners?

One of the main differences between researchers and teachers is that - certainly, in respect to work conditions - the researcher only participates in a small fraction of school life and bears no direct responsibility for the processes of schooling or the outcomes. On the other hand, teachers - with the responsibilities they have to make sure that schools continue to function - are only active in research part-time and carry little direct responsibility for the outcomes of investigations of their own behaviour. But it is rather obvious that for action research to be a partnership, there has to be some kind of sharing, some opportunity to share a mutual responsibility in both education and in research. This sharing happens in reflection not in action: it is achieved through a coming-together in common reflections over conceptualisation, implementation and evaluation of educational and investigatory schemes. And this relexivity is, perhaps, the closest connection embracing all participants. It is not a smooth process without problem, but is a necessary moment in democratic action research. Research design is made democratic through reflectivity in partnership. Reflective partnerships provide a number of ways in which action research is democratised. They provide for: - shared perspectives which reveal blockages to action, - better knowledge of the reality of schooling and thus an increased awareness of what might be, and for, - the identification of where it might be easier to work towards change and for the legitimation of the whole change agenda. In a partnership, no single individual owns the business or the dialogue. Partnership in action research, therefore, gives a number of opportunities to achieve democratic collaboration.

To summarise:

First, it is the teacher who constitutes the immediate basis for changes and it is the teacher who has the potential to carry them out. This working hypothesis has, in particular, led to work carried out which emphasises the collection of data concerning background knowledge partly through interviews and partly through participation in teachers' meetings and conferences. This can also involve interactions through discussions, presentations and the setting-up of priorities mutually agreed as "informative" by group partners. The use of data collected in this sphere will also serve to promote strategic considerations and to remove obstacles to action. The consequence of this hypotheses is that initial theoretical conceptions and paradigms are, of necessity, always regarded as provisional and changeable. Secondly, knowledge of one's own working conditions and those of colleagues increases the chances of changing these conditions and even increases the possibility that such changes are in the direction of more equitable work sharing. Purely positivist research methods have been given a new quality by the work carried out before an investigation (it is the parties which put the items forward) - and not least by using the "results" to accomplish concrete changes in the conditions of work. Thirdly, when the teachers' modes and methods of instruction are made the subject of the dialogue between researchers and teachers - and a seemingly progressive pedagogy is problematized and sought to be described through a common theoretical understanding - the way is opened for concepts of change and intervention. Some of the methodological problems in these research situations are to do with being able to carry out an honest, qualified common description of the relevant circumstances at the start of a case as well as of the actions and the results one might build on to these descriptions. When the researchers strategies and general behaviour are made the topic of research, this calls for the exposition of some quite precise criteria for the sharing of tasks in the work process. At the same time, this is just a part of an action research project which can be made public to outsiders without much hesitation as the object being examined is the project itself.

Chapter eight

Teacher - Researcher Relationships how close can they be?

How "common" can a common project be? Shared understanding is a question about description as well as analysis. But can researchers and teachers share the same painting?

The Nature of Relationships

The relationship between the researcher and the teacher is not necessarily a personal one; they need not be close friends or even know each other very well at the start of a project. What is significant is the relationship between the work being undertaken in a project and the working conditions of the teachers concerned. The basic grounding for a working relationship is neither a deeply empathetic understanding of each others' motives nor of each others' alternative visions. If this sounds a little cold, it is not meant as such; rather, it is to place the emphasis on the business-like part of teacher-researcher relations rather than on the affective side. As we have already suggested, the start of the working relationship is a kind of contract, a mental agreement, which may well be established, revised and re-established many times during the course of a particular project. The quality of the partnership comes later and usually it comes from neither some quasi-legalistic order or from an authority outside of the relationship. It comes from within and it is most usually the result of actually experiencing co-operation - of swapping and alternating function, of sharing project management, of being trusted as an analyst or planner in a project. The test of the worth of any original "contract" framed at the start of a project is the extent to which it permits a better illustration of the qualities and the drawbacks of real work proposals - better for both teachers and researchers. In our experience, the barrier which most usually comes to stand in the way of achieving this kind of illustrative clarification is not - as is often claimed - the influence of traditional interpretations of what teachers should do or what researchers should do; rather, it is the very meagre nature, the really insubstantial character of the *shared reasoning* which different partners or participants bring to a project. In the final analysis, the legitimacy of both the direction and of work differentiation in a project depends mostly upon the respect and the curiosity various partners have about other participants reasoning; and it also depends upon a sensitivity toward the motives others might have for joining in a common project. Action research is not a private investigation; it is much more a commitment to good will and clear explanation of personal wishes and beliefs.

Setting-up basic Rights

The essential part of initial contracts, then will most likely be about the setting-up of basic rights. The teachers, for examples might want to guarantee that they are not the objects of the research or that no book or article will be written about them afterwards. For researchers, this is a hard nut to crack. On the one hand, it is very easy for them to understand the teachers anxiety. A lot of investigations which portray teachers as slightly odd or as behaving strangely have been published. On the other hand, the researchers mandate is, after all, to produce new knowledge and to make such news known to others in the educational and academic community - and it might be argued that one should not hide or suppress research data simply because someone might be offended by it. This specific problem can be solved by an agreement about the right to veto - which will always ensure that nothing is published outside the circle of participants before it has been distributed and discussed and before the teachers had recognised themselves and their world in the description and analyses. The principle being illustrated here, that research relationships are founded upon a contract which quite deliberately attempts to protect the rights and sensitivities of the weaker partners in the agreement is crucial in action research. In practice, our experience tells us that it is usually sufficient to have these agreement publicly displayed at the beginning of projects and that the details of them are rarely invoked. In our work, for example, we have seldom been in a situation in which the teacher partners have exercised a final or complete veto on publication of material; quite the contrary -they have either had no objection whatsoever or they have provided some very constructive criticism when asked to review reports.

The Risk of Exploitation

There is always, however, the risk of exploitation, of dominance and subordination in social relationships and this risk surfaces when one enters into a shared or joint business venture. The conditions which best provide for the safe and profitable sacrifice of individual rights in such collective enterprises is maximum transparency - of opinions of the readability of attitudes and expectations and of willingness to deploy whatever resources one has. Situations like action research collaborations will quite often be threatened by power-games - by strategic plays and ploys; these games are often driven by a variety of different kinds of apprehension - fear of loss of self-esteem, fear of negative sanctions from outsiders, fear of loss of group solidarity, or whatever. These are impossible to avoid completely and that is why the contract between partners - although important - is only one in a whole series of other committed engagements required from individuals.

Three Functions for the Researcher to satisfy

In situations such as these, the early days of research and interventionist relationships, where the exact nature of the substantial agreements are still to emerge, where only a small part of the shared agenda has been established, researchers satisfy three functions:

* as dialogue partners, who are reasonable to talk with and who always listen to what is being said to them and offer interesting questions about the information they receive.

* as consultants, who, for either advice or simply for reference, are prepared to make available knowledge and experience of educational dilemmas and experiments in circumstances that are both different and similar.

- * as analysts, who work on clarifying issues of interest to all parties to the project and who concentrate upon building-up a repertoire of suggestions for further work.

What they must not do is attempt to take-over the role of guru - either in the analysis that is being done or in any programmes of intervention which might spring from a project. Democratic research projects must be based upon visible and agreed perspectives so that they do not end-up as a chain of manipulations. Thus, the processes by which the working assumptions, perspectives and parameters selected for a project are articulated, agreed and addressed must be open to all participants and easy for everyone to observe and understand; and this commitment to visibility give primacy to a number of methods and techniques which can accomplish some complimentarity of the following three central concerns:

- illumination of the working perspective,
- refinement of the methods to be deployed
- and the construction of mutually acceptable strategies for intervention methods and techniques which we shall call making power visible.

Making Power visible? The recognition of Differences

Obvious though it might be, it is worth re-emphasising the range and the number of possible differences between those who come together in an action research project when they first start their collaboration: differences in motives, in interests and in expectations. It is vital, therefore, that these differences are made public if they are to be used, legitimated and respected. But, before we discuss how this might be done, let us consider a small example which illustrates the seriousness of the kind of differences between researchers and teacher/educationalist we have been talking about.

Case Story: A Promise - no Tales

In one municipal education area, the chief education officer had invited the research team to help in the establishment of a grand plan for in-service education and for the professional development of teachers in the town. In the invitation he had revealed that his main interest was to create the perfect plan - perfect in the sense that it was developed through interviews with all head and classroom teachers in the area and secured their majority support. The interest of the researcher (one of us) was somewhat different: it rested upon creating the conditions for the greatest possible democratisation of the scheme that was under action research review - and this, by definition, meant that the research team gained an insight both about and from the power-layers and the power positions and structures in the town's educational political set-up. The need for a contract is obvious. To develop the relationship, the researcher gives a very serious promise; he cannot nor will not publish what he learns or give information about what he discovers about what is going on within the power-organisation, the power levels of the system. He can only suggest to a particular person or group representing a level that they should publish data themselves. Otherwise - how can he be trusted, be given access to unofficial transactions within the organisation or explain the legitimacy of his position to all of the participants.

This story is not about a particular tactic - about publication or veto. One can, of course, cut into it from a number of different angles. Let us try to understand the development of a working relationship between parties who not only have different interests but also different status positions from which to promote these interests. Without much doubt, be it real or imagined, this status in-balance in action research is often tipped in favour of the researcher. A committed exchange between researchers and teachers, however, not only seeks to make these 'power' differences visible but also tries to secure a visible 'giving away' of power by the power holders. Some important ways in which this might be done include:

That in any aspect of the work, the researcher actively works upon getting rid of 'guru attitudes'. The traditional researcher right, for example, supported by both researchers and teachers, which establishes that researchers can behave as if they own or possess the product of research is replaced with an obligation to share decisions about the course and content of the work.

That attempts are made to secure a progressive growth in awareness of how work in project design and development is being divided and allocated, so that, at least in principle, those with least power - like teachers - retain *responsibility* for their own activities.

An Analogy - Teachers' Preparation as an Instrument of Change

Without doubt, the most significant element of emphasis in the paradigm being presented here is an absolute insistence that researchers scrupulously avoid any characterisation of themselves as people who can just tell teachers what to do or how to make progress. It is possible to set-up any number of ideas and analyses of pedagogical principles and such like - but 'correct' decisions about action and interventions in the classroom are most properly located within the teacher-student relationship. Clearly, teachers have many reasons for shaping their activities in a certain way other than that set-out in their contract with the research team. Equally, they also often have a quite genuine desire to give more space and support to an extension of pupils' influence upon their own work. The trick is to get closer to these reasons and desires. One way in which this can be done is by recognising that a most crucial part of a teacher's work are those periods spent in her preparation of the time she will spend working with pupils or with colleagues. It is here that she installs her ideas about content and her frames for setting instruction. So, for the teacher, progress is very much a question about using her capability as an experienced and knowledgeable professional - to set-up meaningful themes for study, to assess the potential of different topics or methods, to consider the demands and details of syllabuses, to wonder about the efficacy of well-established approaches. And it is in recognition of this kind of power, this kind of capability, that we emphasise so strongly the need to acknowledge and work towards the valorisation of the following three key areas of difference:

- that different participants have different experiences,
- that different participants have different reasoning, and that,

- that different participants have different attitudes and ambitions.

But it is not just sufficient just to accept these differences: in action research they have to be regarded as essential forces in the development of democratic perceptions and of visions of what is possible. At the beginning of a project, just as many researcher will have all kinds of preliminary ideas and imaginings about what be interesting and why - so too do both teachers and any other participants have ideas and fields of experimentation *they* want to promote; and they have good reasons for having such predilections. And unless we try to educate each other about our individually cherished educational traditions and transformations, it will be very difficult to establish any democratic co-operation.

In some other educational research paradigms it is normal for researchers to investigate the drives and accomplishments of teachers and pupils; in democratic action research the norm is to study each other - to get inside each others' culture - as a way of forming a new basis for change that connects analysis to praxis.

Organisational Theory and democratic Action Research

Getting inside the culture of schools involves coming to terms with the organisational frameworks on which such cultures depend. But we must be careful here, and particularly with the 'brand' of organisational theory we use to make support to this kind of exploration. Most of the many theories about organisation which are available at the moment are derived from commercial or managerial models. As such they tend to over-use technical methods of analysis and limited versions of the link between organisational features and living cultures. Our approach towards understanding the organisation of a school is rather different. In the sense that our perspective is motivated by a drive to achieve a democratisation of an organisation through action research - between teachers, teachers and pupils, teachers and managers, between staff and governing bodies and between those within the organisation and the influences emanating from outside. We have to abandon, perhaps, the narrow fixation in much management theory which leads one to conclude that since they are the mainstays of an organisation it is ultimately impossible to remove those myths on which the organisation rests. Thus, while these theories encourage one to work with creating counter-myths to effect change, it is our contention, however, that one may well *dissolve* school located myths and replace them with new insights and freshly planned innovations.

Coping with Alienation

To achieve these changes, however, it is necessary to know something about the attitudes of those working inside the organisational culture of the school. What changes will they risk? How do they analyse their situation? Are their plans for the future either tactical or strategic? But to get accurate answers to such questions also means that we render the culture of the school transparent at levels deeper than either the official or the superficial. We have to recognise that we are not exploring a neutral or powerless domain. The slate is not clean and we should expect conflicts in developmental work; they will arise at every level. Teachers are not an homogeneous group. Neither are pupils. And not all school management boards are that democratic.

New Ways of thinking - new Tools for Thought

When school organisational theory is a topic on in-service course programmes or the like, we usually find that teachers find them quite fascinating. However, we also find they spend a lot of time and energy in trying to figure out how to get round or subvert the theories. The theories, they assert, never capture reality - the nuances and the really significant organisational elements that are part of the private or informal culture. This is a tricky tension. It's rather like the kind of response we get, when - for instance - we talk with a manual worker in a brewery or other people who apparently have very little power or influence in connection with their work. It is as if they are thinking 'The system is not the best we could get - but I can cheat it - I have my small tricks, my little ways'. In effect, they are admitting that the organisational culture is, in reality, an inversion of the formal rules - and relies more upon private, informal interpretations, and upon all kinds of subcultural norms and regulations. Recognition of this double agenda prompts us to take-on board a series of issues which are to do with the general question of access. In action-research meetings, these issues emerge as a concern with what "fruitful" achievements might be derived from the project and what roles we might take. To deal with such issues we have found it useful to overlay *local* questions which provide the initial catalyst in a project with ones which target issues of cultural understanding and power relations. Thus, we cut into the problematic by examining the dimensions it has in a different way - by asking less direct and less circumstantial questions;

What activities *in a school organisation are particularly of consequence for the participants?*

What interests *do participants have and how are these expressed?*

What resources, *in the form of knowledge and time, do the participants possess and use?*

What knowledge *about the system do the participants have, who has access to this knowledge and how do they use it?*

A thorough exploration of these questions is essential if teachers and researchers are to discover a basis for honest dialogue. In practice, though, 'abstract' questions about such concerns are often difficult or threatening. Who has the 'right to ask' such questions? One of the great difficulties in these dialogues is trying to agree about reality and to make a mutually relevant picture envisaging what is going to happen and what such plans can be taken to mean. There is a difference between sharing things and building-up harmonies. Some of the difficulties are to be found in the presentation of reasons, in the way they are communicated - in a manner which directly confronts the differences and accepts them as legitimate. In other words, here is the opportunity to take into consideration both inequality in education and quality in education - the relations between individuals and factions and the relations between theory and practice.

Chapter nine

Co-operative Roles in Research and in Development

To get rid of Alienation

The goal of democratic action research, the extension of emancipatory practices, can partly be expressed in a more concrete form - to get rid of alienation. It is remarkable that demands to increase the influence one has upon one's own work are not more widespread in schools than they are. We know that the turning-point here is when teachers come to change their own practices. But why is it so unusual to find teachers working towards radical changes in their behaviour based upon critical observations of what is happening in their schools? To answer this, and to go some way towards understanding the roots of a great deal of the professional alienation amongst teachers, we need only reconsider the characteristics of school culture. As has already been argued in Chapter Two, schools have at least two types of cultural function - cultural reproduction (or mediation) and cultural production (or creation), and it is towards the second of these that most emancipatory activities are directed. It is not surprising that teachers' local and wider practice is more usually attached to the reproductive function of the school culture. They have to deal with some very powerful people and are socialised through some very powerful institutional routines and relational rules. The powerful cultures of the places where they work, school cultures, provide taken-for-granted assumption about what should happen in the daily life of a school and who should decide these matters. These cultures often emphasise tradition and acceptance and as well as providing a basic rationale, they also represent the real resources teachers draw upon to plan for their everyday activities. That is not to say that they do not have space for experimentation, for innovation, for change, but rather it is to say that the agenda for the reflecting upon their routines is mostly already written for them. Even worse, it is often stored as part of normal procedure in the custody of others - Head teachers, advisers, curriculum writers and sadly, educational researchers.

New Tools for Thoughts - new Ways of thinking

To get rid of alienation, teachers will need to acquire new tools for thinking about their own work and their own routines. This ploy, as a strategy for linking educational innovation with educational research and reflection is not new; it has firm historical roots and has, in fact, been the focus of a variety of discussions for the best part of this century - from Dewey to the present day. Elsa Kohler, in 1935, for example, presented one version of this approach in her view of the teacher-as-researcher:

> *'If', she argued, 'a practitioner does not get a chance to make some research or, at least, to become involved with the research of others, as a routine part of her work, then she will probably not be able to understand either the basic means of educational theory based on self-activity or the practice connected with it'.*

This very radical and provocative stance is one we try to apply in our own work as researchers and we do recognise just what a heavy demand it is to place upon teachers. How can we hand over the tools and the means we have for analysing teachers' working conditions in a way which nurtures the development of new ways of thinking about education and new ways of doing it? One immediate difficulty here is to persuade teachers that these tools are worth having. This offer by researchers, 'to hand-over their research skills', is not always received with enthusiastic acclaim because it does not provide an immediate and simple pathway to an easier life in school. Very often it is necessary to introduce new tools, different view-points and portrayals of actual cases to demonstrate that existing perceptions can be used to develop and enrich their work through this complementary process. We have to be sensitive in demonstrating that we have no intention of illusion that, as researchers, we are bringing some kind of new 'manual' into school; we actually bring a documentary about the strength of a model, the strength of a bunch of methods and of the power of these models and methods to solve concerns about democratisation - not, maybe always the most direct road but never, hopefully, against the democratic process. Using these strategies, this kind of action research can be useful in curriculum development, in management and organisational development and other projects which stop short of direct work on emancipatory influence. The attraction it has for us, of course, is that we feel that if teachers believe they can happily manage a democratic life style in school they are more likely to demand similar organisational forms in other institutions and - in turn - in society. Not only will this give more and more citizens a better chance of steering and directing their own lives, but all this will be done in a way which keeps solidarity with teachers and other citizens.

Theories are corrected

Theories deployed in action research projects, and especially those theories used at the outset of a particular project, can hardly have anything other than a provisional character. This does not mean that one is theoryless; that there is no consideration of how one imagines things might be according to some abstract 'logic'. What it does mean is that these theoretical considerations are always to be regarded as temporary and as in the need of correction and development through-out the course of a project. In our discussion, a theory is taken to be that stractural abstract dimension which is formed according to the insights and empirical experiences of a person at some given point in time. There are difficulties in perceiving the multiplicity of reality in one theory. And it is this problem that is most often expressed as the theory-practice problem which bedevils research. Theory formation must be seen in the light of many social conditions and - in school research - in relation to the power system and to the social system and to the inequalities contained within these system. Any formation of theory about a school's development stands in a direct relation to the social system; i.e., the formation derives both its inspiration and its special significance from a concrete social reality. This facticity can be revealed or concealed - but it cannot be cancelled. This suggests that if we are to develop honest dialogue with those with whom we work in action research we will need to reveal not only the theories we are working with but also how these theories were formed through the social interaction of participants, through relationships like those between the researcher and the teacher.

The Action of Research

As we have already argued earlier in this book, another level in action research is to be found in the direct meeting between researchers and teachers. It is a meeting between parties with unequal responsibilities, resources and expectations; not unequal worthiness but unequal work conditions. The researcher has a different position to that of teachers and will normally be employed some place other than the school or area in which a project is based. The researcher also has a position according to which assumptions about the legitimacy of her theoretical knowledge and academic credentials lend a certain status - even though the researchers concrete knowledge about the circumstances under investigation - at least at first - is presumably very much scanty to that of the teachers involved. How, then, can these inequalities be managed and how can the theories being formed in early meetings, theories which will be used to shape a project, be shown to be connected with these unequal conditions?

We often work in pairs. As a pair, we can achieve some role differentiation which helps address some of the issues raised above. One of us has the task at project meetings of positing questions, of deepening the critical discussion to see how far teacher opinion, attitude or perception can be pushed. The other has the job of reporting what takes place or is said and of noting the kinds of interplay that happen. We call these two roles *inspirer* and *reporter*.

We also work with mutual differences and can expect, therefore, that the manifestation of counter-power plays or whatever will be extensive and various. When our observations indicate that it is possible to identify with a sub-section of individuals in a group who are willing to use their resources to pursue particular sectional goals, to come to terms with the possibilities in a system or to initiate their own activities, we define these as a faction: if the sub-group is aware of these conditions, we talk about a conscious faction.

When is Action Research democratic?

The difference between traditional positivistic research in sociology and this type of research is that qualitative research is more interested in the identification of variables which elucidate and convert a problem than in presenting hypotheses for re-examination: but it is obvious that when 'fruit-bearing' or promising variables do exist, they will often be able to be rendered operational. To this end, qualitative action research must interest itself in changes as things go along, changes of the research/action tendencies themselves;

> through redefinition by analysis and refinement.
>
> through strategic considerations being legitimated by common acceptance of the group governing the project.
>
> through agreements about the operational perspectives being refined and redefined as action tendencies unfurl, and,
>
> through processes by which the research work is carefully kept true to basic agreements.
>
> which also means that agreements can be re-negotiated.

Conflicts between researchers and teachers can arise in other ways than by design and disruptions - small or large breaks can occur when, for example - the research team or the teacher group exceed agreements. Sometimes, either group is too eager, too quick and therefore too inaccurate in confirming a particular interpretation or in proposing some intervention strategy. And sometimes either group is too slow in grasping the significance and the nature of the opportunity for new activity in some space or other, (even though the elucidation of the problem actually exists as common knowledge) or when differences in relation to access, interests, resources and action potential are too great. It becomes important in action research to keep researchers' actions and conduct readily open to public scrutiny and to ensure that explanations of their behaviour are frequent, frank and full. Without this kind of conscious exposure, it is difficult to see how teachers can come to comprehend the researchers' background and methods and - without such comprehension - could come to critically engage with the research team's contributions. One could call this commitment a contribution to the demystification of the researcher's role and function. At the same time, recording of the research team's contributions and conduct during the different stages of an action research project constitutes material which can form the basis for controlling the research group. It is also possible to use this material as a basis for the valuation of changes and of how long a generalisation of the results achieved is reasonable. As we have already explained, action research strives to break away completely from those research or developmental practices whereby researchers or innovators come and dispense explanations and solutions to front-line practitioners. In contrast, it works towards a situation in which both research and action schemes are collective phenomenon - i.e., that the co-operation between researchers and teachers generates solutions to problems based on an agreed perspective, and that it is accepted that several possible solution will be appropriate. But what does this mean in practice? How are these ideals given physical expression? In the physical meeting between researchers and teachers, there are at least two important roles which must be filled if progress is to be made - the role of agitator (or *inspirer*) and the role of registrar (or *reporter*). Of course, to identify these two functions is not to imagine that this provides a thorough and complete description of the part researchers play in action research. The roles are situational specific, of relative importance and refer mostly to contributions to *meetings* rather than to other parts of a project like data collection, reporting, evaluating, etc., etc.

On being an Inspirer

In Touraine's (1982) analysis of the operations of political movements, a basic framework is presented of how to manage different roles so as to secure effective progress towards group goals. His analysis is based on the premise that the most easily defensible contribution researchers can make is of an enabling character - enabling the best possible development of how a group understands its situation and its action potential. This is not dissimilar from the way we have defined democratic action research - as being based on a desire to maximise a democratic decision-making process, and in that connection, to maximise the action potential of the group concerned. In the sense that Touraine's discussion was concerned with the workings of political movements, we have to be cautious when trying to relate his work to developing action research in public institutions like schools. Touraine focuses his analysis on the tactical or manoeuvring plane of the meeting between the two 'sides' of the operation - the researchers and 'the movement'. For our purposes, the obligations and behaviour of the researcher in the *relationship* between the two is of greater interest and moment. As we have already mentioned, researchers are allocated two roles at meeting: one of these is to take a decision or picture or interpretation to the deepest or widest implication possible, that is, according to the *groups* understanding of the case or the situation and not just that according to the researcher's opinion.

Touraine's approach can, in brief, be described as having some of the following features: On the basis of some kind of provisional agreement about that perspective which an organisation or group determines as representing its general concern, the first requirement of a research team is to enter collectively into the life of the organisation. The first real task for the team is, as far as possible, to clarify the developmental perspective being employed, i.e., as radically and as consistently as possible and clearly this involves getting a feeling of the organisation's main shortcomings and its main ambitions. In educational terms this is quite a task: in one of our projects (Iceland Wharf) the period from the first meeting to the drawing-up of an agreed framework between the research and teacher groups lasted for eleven months. Those of us who made up the research group used this time for collecting various pieces of basic information about the school and its circumstances or conditions - in relation, for example, to the local community - and also, thorough interviews and discussions, for getting the teachers to express their wishes and requirements in relation to the school as an organisation, in relation to colleagues and management, in relation to pupils and in relation to the local community.

The Inspirer's (Touraine's 'agitator') very first job is to familiarise his/herself with, at least, the teachers' views of the problems in hand. In addition to being well-informed, it is necessary for whosoever is performing this function to develop a high degree of sensitivity with regards to exactly what motivates a proposed strategy or decision and with regards to whose or which interests are being rewarded through a particular initiative. But the inspirer's role is essentially that of provocateur, the 'tough guy' who constantly raises or reiterates the hard questions in discussion. Is this the best, the ultimate you can suggest? Does this square with the concepts you have identified as crucial? Is this in accord with what you planned at your last meeting? Has someone introduced a deviation, a way forward which departs from earlier agreements or decisions?

At a more practical level, the inspirer acts as a group's long-range memory, i.e., he/she has a comprehensive view of the concepts being used, of the decisions being taken and of the decision-making process - so that all these are made available for recording and collection. Consequently, the inspirer's participation involves a conscious scepticism, a commitment to probing, to posing questions, to trying to analyse points-of-view, to summing-up thoughts and ideas and - importantly - to keeping unsolved questions ready for re-introduction to the agenda. Sometimes the inspirer, paradoxically, acts as a brake on the progress of a project. An adherence to preserving unsolved problems sometimes manifests itself as a delaying manoeuvre, that is as a wish to avoid having certain decisions being made at meetings. This delay might be attempted for various reasons: because the research worker feels that the basis for a decision is insufficiently clear or because the decision would have consequences which are too extensive in relation to the basic perspective set by the group. A decision made too quickly will often create more problems than it solves; hasty decisions invariably mean that the unity between individuals in a group upon which implementation depends cannot hold because their insights into what is implied are not based upon full and adequate analysis. It is possible to arrive at a situation in which the research workers directly inhibit the adoption of decision in order to win the time necessary for people to get themselves better informed about the substance of the matters at hand. It can also happen in cases where the inspirer feels that the decision does not represent an expression of the best, the maximum which can be achieved within the group's own brief.

On being a Reporter

The second role - that of registrar or reporter - has a special significance for the research group itself. It is the job of the reporter to ensure the production of an overall survey of the movements which take place during the course of the action-research process. The reporter is the one who makes sure that the group receives important data about the group itself. The recording of this information is often completely uninteresting, but it becomes significant - and interesting - when conflicts arise. In some cases the research group can find themselves in such serious conflict with some of the teachers that the reporter is required to free him/herself from the role and intervene in opposition to the inspirer so as to draw attention to the fact that things are going too fast or too far - or to intervene in opposition to the relevant parts of the teacher group to remind them of the obligations of earlier decisions or previous agreements. Our own experience has suggested that it is usually necessary for research workers to be able to exchange roles, to move from acting the part of inspirer at one meeting to that of reporter at another, or even in a different period of a single meeting. It is also worth saying that when the going gets really tough and the conflicts get serious, it can be both necessary and wise to throw-off the 'role' and resort to one's common sense. But that's not the fault of the casting.

Chapter ten

How can the Methods be used?

To apply a democratic Vision?

Some years ago, when we first set-out to build a European network of researchers and teachers working with an explicit interest in democratisation, we were often greeted with a surprised reaction. People interested in educational reform were talking about inequality, racism, minority rights, gender issues and so on: but they were not using the word democracy any longer. We quickly gained the impression that many of those interested and deeply committed to educational reform and to the reduction of inequality in schools and society were somehow excluded from the use of the concept. The real shock of this experience, however, was a realisation that this was not just a semantic shift or preference; what seemed to have happened was that assumptions and concerns which inspired many of those who had once been quite happy to describe their goal as democratic schooling had faded away at the same time as use of the word. These assumption had been part of a consensus, but when the consensus was pushed aside and replaced with more specifically substantive concerns, those involved lost some of their motivation to reflect upon how one should deal with power in schools. And this is now one of the problems for Western European society - to restore the struggle and the vision for the democratisation of schooling and to establish what such a struggle contains. One way of making this restoration is through the extension of international networks to provide for this enrichment: another way is to analyse power as practice. In the following chapter, we will be concerned with a particular part of this struggle, the building of a better education through the progressive development and refinement of didactic understanding. But it is worth emphasising that this goal is not separate from the development and improvement of the work conditions of teachers. We are of the opinion that if teachers are not able to democratise their own areas of action and interaction, staff relations and the organisational environment of the school, they will have great difficulty in successfully establishing a *democratic set* of practices and atmosphere in the classroom.

One immediate consequence of this persuasion is that the unit we work with in school has to be greater than one: one must have both a person and a group. The unit for democratic action research in the school need not encompass the whole school staff or personnel, it could be a faction of the whole, an innovative faction, but it must have some collective dimension. At least, a group can do more than resist - it can also influence its own practice. If one believes it is possible to make both resistance and to improve the quality of interaction and conditions of work, then you needn't use all the time for getting around and fiddling the system. Basically it is a problem with our language that we have this narrowing of minds, that if we recognise power then we will have to take it seriously all the time. The issue is not to take power so seriously that one becomes incapable of taking decisions or actions. In one of our first projects, we were working in a school characterised by a noticeably collegial atmosphere or ethos. The teachers cared about their jobs, their school and each other - they had their afternoon tea and cakes together and enjoyed each others' professional and social company. But they wanted to achieve more than this cosy atmosphere. They wanted an improvement in the quality of their professional experience and achievements. But how to get this was the challenge they made for the researcher members of the project group. By introducing them to the notion that if they began to consider their relations and interactions not just in affective terms but also according to the interests - access - resources - action components of their work in the school, we suggested they could get a step further. But once this suggestion was made public, we then had to be very precise in all communications with the group.

Solidarity or working with Practitioners

In educational innovation and development, Becker's famous question about ethical commitment, 'Whose side am I on?', is often presented as some kind of a moral trap. If one attempts to answer it with Becker's own solution ("the underdog's side") one is open to the charge of always being in opposition to the power-holders in schools. On the other hand, answers like "I am on the side of the students - or the teachers - or I don't know whose side I am on" are regarded as evasive. From our perspective, the question is inadmissible. It assumes that such an ethical question is capable of being answered out-of-context and without reference to the concrete conditions of a case; it also assumes that one can predict one's stance towards these conditions before one has analysed them. To be faced with this question is very like some of the classic situations one finds oneself in as part of political struggle - the question is put in such a way that consideration of the case is closed before it is begun. How can one answer such questions in abstract? But one can turn the question round. A useful technique in action research is to reveal interest - both group and individual interest - as a prelude to asking "Who shares my interest?". The point here being that solidarity is not something that can be established in abstract or outside the conditions in which it is being demanded. To protect this, it might be useful to adopt techniques like always closing project meetings with a summary of the least harmful decisions or understandings reached - to operate as if one is trying to say "If nothing further develops, at least we came this far". We must preserve the doubleness of solidarity; solidarity is not an issue of one-sidedness but rather of the relationship between self-interests and those of others. The methodological (or ethical) consequence of this is that in terms of "Whose side are we on?", we always keep the options open - the option between envisaging a next step one will take to continue and develop a working relationship or to cancel this relationship. Revealing self-interest is a defensive strategy and there are risks in this stance: if the participants to the dialogue have not made their interests clear, public and transparent, then they cannot expect others to do so. Why should anyone share interest with me, if I do not dare to express any interest myself?

Research and Practice as Reflections

Researchers are not a link in the chain of a school's or educational area's hierarchical structure and thus they have no *structurally determined* position or power for changing practice. They are, though, not without influence. A minimal requirement of researchers in any action research agreement will be that they carry-out investigation. When the results of these are of a kind which clarifies the differences in perspectives being used in a case and/or the possible inequalities of the conditions which exists, then they have influence. Clearly, from our perspective, these investigations will be shaped by the twin aim of extending equality and of exposing the possibilities of several solutions for a single issue. Most people who have worked in a team situation will have had experience of how seldom it is that a single solution to a problem is all that comes to hand during discussion. And sometimes, at these times, it is actually possible to apply more than one solution to the same problematic.

It is difficult to imagine, then, how these endeavours could fail to connect with teacher's concerns and, by definition, with teachers feelings and sensitivities. This contact, by which researchers unavoidably disturb the very perspectives teachers use to hold together their personal occupational identities, is potentially explosive. It is important, therefore, to contain conflict and tension in these moments when research touches practice by holding them to the CASE, the issues, and not accepting them to find expression as personality or relational clashes.

The Contract

Educational research is usually initiated in one of two ways. Either by the research team seeking permission to investigate a problem that bothers them or by some sponsor from 'inside' educational practice - usually policy-makers - contracting researchers to seek for solutions for some problem defined as important by the sponsor. As soon as the investigations which stem from either of these initiatives begins to impinge on the concrete world, the educational reality in which people live, they always run into the same basic ethical impasse. On what ground can we defend basing research on a contract that makes one person the *object* of another person's scrutiny and study - be they teachers, managers, students, or even researchers themselves? Action research seek a different basis for the contract. It stresses an emphasis on the discovery of shared rather than separate research/action concerns and, in contrast with the efforts in traditional research to facilitate ease of access to project management. Action research gives the highest priority to sharing resources. And perhaps it is important to emphasis here that even in this simplistic form this breaks with traditional approaches to the establishment of contracts for researching and innovating in schools. It really does call for an open contract which can be re-negotiated rather than a fixed agreement. Sharing resources means that one is prepared to accept that participants will disagree, will have different rights and will want to protect these - and that such conflict possibilities are built into the contract. The contract in action research, then, becomes a set of agreements between the partners, but they can be re-negotiated as fresh insights and newly recognised interests come to light in the course of a project. In other words, it could be said that we are more concerned with adjusting and verifying than with rules and normal contract procedures. This often brings some complex problems with it. One such problem is when participants succumb to the temptation of getting involved in tactical manoeuvres rather than in a struggle for a shared improvement of some aspect of the social lives. Another problem - more common than the first - is as the projects unfold and begin to reveal new possibilities for action, new choices, then renegotiation of contracts becomes part of the game. Finally, of course, in establishing contracts which are plastic enough to reflect differences between the parties involved, we should anticipate that sometimes some of those involved simply change their mind. Contracts aimed at providing for some management of difference in a collaborative venture are complex because they will always refer to relationships and interactions that are quintessentially conflictual. Perhaps we can avoid paying mere lip service to the idea of sharing interests, resources and objectives through action research contracts if we consider the source of possible conflicts: this is illustrated in the following model, which might apply to any concrete case - projects involving teachers and professional researchers, or pupils, parents etc. The challenge is - where does conflict reside in the particular case under review?

Quantitative Investigation + Qualitative Change

The challenge of finding out how partners differ in their interests and expectations in a project and of making these both public and consequential provides us with a good illustration of just how quantitative investigation can be linked with qualitative research.

Case Story: Individual Opinions

In a municipal educational area, the project described in more detail on page 74 was beginning to develop but it was becoming very clear that further progress was going to be heavily dependent upon how individual teachers viewed the general achievements and innovations the project had accomplished up to this point and how they thought it would be best to move further forward from new situations. All schools in the municipality were involved in innovatory work, but the levels of activity varied and certain interests being developed contradicted others. The research members of the group, on the basis of their visits to schools and of their discussions with teachers, were convinced that some fundamental differences of opinion were emerging. It was suggested - to the teacher representatives, to the leaders of each School Council, to Headteachers and to co-ordinators of the various study groups in the project - that it might be beneficial to conduct a questionnaire survey of opinion. Nothing novel here - indeed, even in this project it was taken as read that collecting data in this way was no different from that of the interviewing programme already frequently used. However, what we want to suggest is novel is the way in which the participants access to the construction and use of the data base came to be protected and extended.

It was agreed that all the different individuals listed above should be asked to make written assessments of how they saw the situations the project had established in the schools with respect to:

* possibilities for pedagogical change + and barriers to pedagogical change

- * possibilities for administrative change + and barriers to administrative change,

and,

- * possibilities for changing staff relations + and barriers to changing staff relations.

After the various assessments had been collected, the statements they contained were lightly edited and used to provide the body of a questionnaire to be answered by all the teachers in the municipal area. The completed questionnaires were returned (anonymously) to the Teacher Union representatives at each school and formed the basis of discussion about future steps in the project in school-by-school meetings. The research team had promised that only those working at a school would see the collected opinion of their own colleagues, although every school had a summary version of the common collation of returns from the whole area. The teachers, we must say, were somewhat astonished: it was the first time that so many of them had expressed opinions on so many topics and in so many sensitive areas. The whole sequence, then, had the following shape:

Researchers	**Teachers**
1. Putting basic questions: What is progressing in your school? What is difficult in your school?	
	2. Giving a number of statements.
3. Organising responses into a sample of statements.	
	4. All statements in sample scrutinised by the teachers and their feelings on them fed back to researchers.
5. Counting and coding of teachers attitudes and goals	

6. Deciding about what to do with schools' coded knowledge taken by each school staff with power of veto and right to decide priorities.

7. Holding the information store.

But is holding the information store a problem?

How can we, as researchers, use our special capabilities and make good use of this material to develop the project?

In our view, the main significance of this case story is that the method used provides a model for building effective contracts. The model is that quantitative data is not seen or used for generalising or for promoting grand theory but for action/research development. To put it another way, the investigative part of the project leads to individuals being able to see their own conditions in relation to many others who are involved and to use the insights to evaluate proposals for action. Thus, the researcher's aim in the quantitative part of the exercise, rather than being limited to the validity and the beauty of the empirical study, is to do with finding ways of putting teachers in the position of being able to get hold of better insights and more powerful developmental strategies, more powerful in the sense than they are informed by a deeper understanding of the interests and influences of significant others. The teachers are able to see their common work situation in print. They can choose to use it for making criticism of interests, of resourcing, of access opportunities, of action tendencies and, crucially, the process used for decision-making and decision-taking. Thus, quantitative data is recognised as being relative and is treated as such. It is not seen as providing a 'true' picture of social reality - it is just a tool, a catalyst, a device for provoking thought, insight and criticism - for extending publicity amongst parties to a contract. This publicity strengthens those teacher groups which might have had difficulties in getting their unique interests heard and accommodated and it strengthens their access to the systems of schooling. As such, it is also democratising - it reveals differences of opinion and of how 'work' is allocated.

The Problem of Procedure

In the final analysis, researchers are semi-detached from the real development of the kind of action research we are elaborating in this book. As we have been at pains to establish, fundamental to our approach is the recognition that teachers are the main supporting column on which educational development and school improvement is constructed. This is why we have been so taken-up with the ability of teachers to express themselves and to be heard. If teachers do not experience democratic procedures in their daily lives, how, then, are they to teach children how to function democratically? But where does that leave researchers? It limits the extent to which they can ask probing question, or get involved with strategies or use the understandings they get as they collect data on behalf of the project. Solutions have to belong to the teachers - and maybe that means they also have to come from them as well. One way out of this dilemma, however, is to concentrate on allowing teacher members of project groups to control and direct the *evaluation* stages of a project or phase of a project. In accepting this responsibility, teachers become more proficient and more powerful. In evaluation, one learns and teaches - one interrelates viewpoints with outcomes and consequences.

Chapter eleven

Sharing Power with Teachers

Issues of Ownership

The basis of the real inequalities between teachers and researchers is complicated. It is not simply a question of difference. To be sure, individuals in a common situation *will* have different perceptions of what is happening and of what is important; they will have personal notions of what is the purpose of the interaction and of what will give them the greatest personal gratification. But the *inequalities* that exist between them are to do with the opportunities they have for *acting* upon their individual understandings and ambitions, opportunities for creating new insights and visions for themselves and for the situation in which they find themselves. This is true whatever interactional group in an educational setting we care to imagine: teachers and teachers, teachers and managers, teachers and researchers, researchers and managers, teachers and parents, teachers and pupils - and so on. This means that the question of power-sharing is to do with the question of the ownership of key parts of the business and with the management of whatever mechanisms are activated to determine how the business of either ordinary action or of power-sharing is conducted. Simple though this notion of power-sharing in education might seem, it raises a huge number of related questions - questions of ownership and questions of management. Both sets of questions are essentially about whose definition of the situation is the one that counts. It forces the following *Ownership* issues:

> *Managing access to the diversity of interests, needs and resources that various people will bring to a project.*
>
> *Forging agreements about the real benefits to be derived from the common enterprise, the joint activities - benefits*

which will apply to individual partners or to factions within the larger group.

Translating competing definitions into practice and praxis: and issues of the operational realisation of differences in resources and access.

Controlling the extent to which the desire to share power (or, at least, not to lose influence) means the same thing to all participants. Are they similarly motivated in this desire?

And the question of power-sharing also forces, for example, a similarly complex range of considerations about the management *of power-sharing? Considerations to do with:*

The mechanism for reaching agreements, for making arrangements, for taking decisions about future action.

The processes through which participants develop an awareness and come to see that 'good will' is not enough, that we have action commitments as a dynamic.

The protection of the collectivist side of the enterprise and *the opportunity for individuals to have influence.*

The preservation of sufficient space with a project for those factions which emerge to work as factions whilst making sure that these sub-groups do not hurt the 'common' process.

The monitoring of how disagreements are resolved and agreements are managed.

Let us explore the ramifications of both of these kinds of issues again, but this time - rather than exploring power-sharing as an educational act, as a classroom-based accomplishment. Both processes are parallel.

Teacher - student relations

Classroom work

In one innovation programme in which we participated, the initial stages of the action research project - as reported elsewhere in this book in Chapter One - began when the teaching staff of the school involved, encouraged by their Head teacher, approached the research team with the request that we should help them explore and answer a disarmingly simple question that had become important in the school concerned:

> *We think it would be a good idea to listen to what our pupils say a bit more carefully and to try to take what they say more seriously. Do you have any suggestions about how we might do this.*

Consider the power questions like this seemingly innocent enquiry involves:

> *For whom is this a serious question and why?*
>
> *Are all teachers similarly placed with respect to the significance of the question or, indeed, to the consequences of any 'solutions, which might emerge?*
>
> *Do the teachers even agree about what terms like 'listening' and 'acting' mean?*
>
> *Why are these questions of immediate and relevant concern for this school?*
>
> *Is it more or less important than other issues individuals or groups amongst the school staff consider worthy of inclusion on the 'action' agenda for the school?*
>
> *Who will benefit from having these issues addressed; and in what way will they benefit?*

> *Whose knowledge and understanding of the goals of the school and of the way in which it operates are most legitimate as a basis for initial research?*

We recognise, of course, that these are all rather abstract questions which have, in themselves, little of immediate relevance to the essentially practical topic - the teachers' more concrete question about listening to their pupils and innovation. And we do not list these abstract questions so as to show how it is possible to generate 'interesting' theoretical speculations around practical problems. The point of the list above is that it illustrates the concerns one ultimately has to face when one is attempting to connect educational change and power-sharing. It is almost certain that any experimental solution is likely to have only minimal impact. More importantly, it is obvious that 'experimental' solutions, however creative, will always separate action plans from personal commitment. Any innovation, therefore, which arises from such solutions and intended as an answer to basic concerns, will always be either a highly moralistic collection of new practices and procedures (the further imposition of one set of powerful peoples' understandings and definitions on the actions of others) or it will be just a failure to discover and to implement genuinely 'new' ways of working in the school. In this project for example, it would have been entirely possible to have taken the starter question at face value and, together with the teachers, to have initiated an exploration of - say - a range of immediately available experiments. Try a survey of pupils! Conduct a debate with them! Evaluate the different responses amongst them to the various themes and pedagogical approaches you make available in the school! Any proposals such as these, however, would be seriously weak in at least two respects; first, they would be weak in that, expressed in the form and manner set-out above they assume a prior knowledge of the essential processes of cultural mediation and cultural production which made the original question about how to listen to children a necessary reflection in the first place. Crucially, the very issue raised by the teachers initiating this programme hints at a concern with power-sharing in the classroom.

But being sensitive to the issue of power-sharing is not enough. One has also to apply this sensitivity to the very processes through which the search for solutions, the quest for new ways of organising affairs in the school or the classroom, is conducted. 'To listen more carefully' is not really reducible to a simple technical question. It is just as much an issue of personal values and of the opportunities for acting on these values. For these reasons, the project we are now talking about developed in a rather interesting way. Working on the assumption that if we are to deal effectively with power-sharing as praxis in democratic action research, educational issues have to be connected with personal involvements and understandings, the project team reached an agreement that the problem of 'listening' was as much a problem for teacher discourse as it was in classroom discourse. Alienation or 'deafness', suppression of interest or 'not acting', are not the preserve of classroom relations; they are also existential problems in inter-staff relations as well. Can teachers really 'listen' more carefully to children if they have not, first of all, 'listened' to each other. Realising the force of this view-point, the teachers in the project school determined to concentrate their analytical and action efforts in the first part of the project upon their own discourses, meetings and decision-making activities. How do we share and store information, they reflected. How do we arrive at decisions? How do we communicate our feelings - about work loads, conditions and duties? How do we find ways of managing disagreements; disagreements about what we as individual teachers want to get out of working in this school as against what the staff as a group decide is for the best? As a result of these reflections, the organisation of the staff meeting, how it was conducted and how discussion at the meeting relayed to practice became the initial focus of analysis and reformation in this project. For us, this outcome had two great attractions. First, the teachers in the school began to experience and to deal with the problems of educational reform or innovation as an existential issue and they did so in a way which allowed them to preserve the doubleness of social experience; they found a way of relating their individual, personal interests to those of others and, in the course of doing this, they got more knowledgeable about how such a process could be achieved in a principled manner.

And secondly, the teachers began to reveal to themselves the power-layers and the power-related assumptions that had become the bedrock of the school praxis which they wished to adjust and reform in their main change agenda.

Power-sharing as pedagogy

Power is essentially an economy of social resources and interests. And we find this definition of power equally as useful in thinking about ways of developing both pedagogy and the practices of teachers and pupils in the classroom as it is in analysing or controlling the relationship between teachers to those between teachers and researchers. Classroom life is a power game and dialogue is as much a key feature of this particular game as it is of any other social interaction. Teachers and pupils are engaged in a constant set of negotiations, a moving interactional dialogue inside the established order of their praxis. Daily, they turn towards one another and find various ways of resolving and managing the essential differences of interests, resource and opportunities which exists between them and between their different senses of what counts as appropriate or legitimate actions. It follows, then, that *pedagogy* is also about power-sharing; it is about balancing the see-saw of teachers' and pupils' sense of priority and preferences. In a great deal of traditional commentary to do with teachers pedagogical analysis there tends to be an over-emphasis on one side of this power equation, on the action of one party to this interactional accomplishment that is classroom life. Often, then, much pedagogical scrutiny can be reduced to a version of the following, rather straight-forward question; 'How Can I - as a Teacher - Make My Messages Fairly Clear and Simple and get them Across in a simple way?' Of course, in fact this is a technical question; as such, it is actually quite remote from the social reality constructed in the setting to which it refers. Similarly, if lessons fail to go as planned, this too has to attributed to a failure of the teachers' preparation or to a fault in the pupils' motivation, or both; *faults* and *problems* always being treated as personal shortcomings in this kind of explanation. But a rather obvious, if naive, assumption lurks behind this kind of pondering; it is the underlying belief that students, the power-subjects of most classroom power games, learn only from what a teacher is presenting or saying. Sometimes, they do. But often, very often, they are learning something else and something other than what the teacher 'plans'. This is not because of 'bad' teaching. It is simply a consequence of the essential nature of classroom situations. Students, as well as responding to messages the teacher attempts to make count, also need to discover strategies through which they can adjust their own understandings and activities to these messages. At the same time, these students are also working very actively upon their own socialisation, their own individual enrichment. This can - and does - lead to situations where the students refuse to give their consent to the teachers' plans or to go as far as to resist what is being done to them. Realising this schism - which exists as an ever-present potential for struggle between teachers as power holders and pupils as power subjects - always serves to remind us, as action researchers, that adequate understanding of pedagogy, of didactics and of the development of pedagogical relations through our approach will have to have wider reference than some official and some traditional reflections on these areas of school life. In effect, it reminds us that if we are to be influential in educational development then we will have to find and deploy tools which, at one and the same time, can both develop our understanding of how pedagogical power relations work and reveal possibilities for transformation of the social relations involved - a transformation which follows some principled plan. The challenge is to find just those tools and strategies which can be used to change the students' situation from being 'listeners' to 'participants', to explore this challenge, let us consider another case story.

Case story: A technical School

In a work school - a technical school - nearly all of the educational programmes were in some way or other based upon manual labour. The basic idea behind this orientation was, that as it was highly probable that through this immersion the students would be able to see through and to manage the 'transformation of nature into socially useful products' (or 'work'), they would thereby get a more complete picture and fuller knowledge of production and of the nature of work in general. Soon, however, some trouble occurred.

First, there was an issue of whose *idea* was being used to produce some of the goods being manufactured in one of the programmes. Who, the students asked, 'owned' the product? And then, - and relatedly - who controlled the distribution or the 'marketing' of the product?

On the face of it, a simple enough dispute. Later, however, those involved in the project came to see this as a question of power. If one successfully achieves the aim of allowing pupils to master the 'whole' process of their productive or their educational experience, this success also brings with it the possibility of them seeking to know the reasons for their activities and to profit from the use and the value of whatever it is that they 'produce' in the classroom. In a nut-shell, they become interested in the possibilities of power-sharing with teachers in all phases of their pedagogical encounters - the planning or conceptualisation phase; the action or implementation phase; and, the outcome or evaluative phase.

For the teacher, in these circumstances, the issue of pedagogical planning and reformation becomes more complex: it becomes a question of how she can achieve a full and effective operation when, in fact, she does not know the full agenda through which her plans will be realised. Can such planning be both principled and sensitive to the unknown agenda of the pupils?

Let us return to certain fundamental assumptions of action research and, in an attempt to address this question, try to relate these assumptions to certain guidelines about the management of lessons and especially about the evaluation of how lessons run and what they achieve. And, in this kind of discussion, it is worth noting the great differences in what is accepted as 'effective practice' between those who advocate 'back-to-basics' and those who favour more co-operative education. It is entirely feasible that one can plan and organise schooling in a manner which reflects an acceptance of the assumption that education is about the acquisition of basic skills and that it is possible to measure the more important outcomes of education as a 'score'. But, if we are really serious about involving the pupils - and, by definition, about involving them in the conceptual, the implementation and the evaluative phases of actual educational processes and experiences - then it is evident that the evaluation of experience is something more than a simple 'scoring' of how many 'skills' have been passed from the teachers to the pupils or students. It will have to be a kind of written or a spoken dialogue between the teachers and the students; it will be entirely based upon 'sentences' formed by teachers and pupils in dialogue, sentences dealing with interests addressed in lessons, resources used, how activities were done and how access to different aspects of the whole experience was managed.

However, if we accept that co-operative education means that we have to define and to operate pedagogical evaluation along the lines set-out above, this does raise certain problems about the degree of publicity to be achieved and given through evaluation?

To whom should it be made public and how: the rest of a class, a whole school, parents? Because procedures here are so complicated, we often find that evaluation in our projects comes to take the form of an exhibition of the product of the work pupils have done with their teachers. But does that mean that it is less exact, less informative than assessment through a mark, a 'score', given by teacher-assessors? Of course not! The problem is that it is more difficult to produce and to handle statistics of educational accomplishments through this approach and it is certainly more difficult to make comparisons; however, maybe such statistics and comparisons are not that important for the participants to the experience not only have real significance to those 'outsiders' concerned with social control or with getting some 'generalised' picture of schooling.

Guidelines

To be consistent with the basic principles of democratic action research which we have set-out in this book, any guidelines about developing pedagogy in school will have to encompass opportunities for students both to act democratically and to gain many different kinds of experience. Mutual co-influence *and* cultural renewal would seem difficult if this was not the case. Students need to learn that they can act democratically and also that they can learn and get experiences through different kinds of activity. They can learn through physical and through bodily activities; they can learn through experimentation and through interaction as well as through more traditional pedagogy. And we can also use dialogue as a means for bringing increased participation for pupils or students. We can listen to their ideas, their visions; and although 'listening' does not in itself produce more democratic educational experiences, it does mean that we begin to move in a direction whereby any inequalities that pertain are made public and through which the motives of different partners are made more accessible. For example, precise ways in which the interests, the dreams or the resources of the teacher are different from those of the pupils are revealed.

However, if a *principled* development of *pedagogy* is to be achieved, if participation and co-influence are to be increased, a crucial hurdle to overcome is the issue of how to take dialogue further and how to remove alienation. To achieve this, it is clear that it must be all parties involved in classroom encounters who determine the pedagogical agenda; otherwise, those excluded have little personal responsibility for activities and engagements which emerge.

There is a very close connection between democratisation and moves to reduce alienation and between taking responsibility and becoming powerful. There are, we know, some enormous challenges here. One of these, which we have found looms particularly large during the very early stages of projects concerned with developing pedagogy and reducing alienation as a paired objective, is the gap which exists between teachers and pupils - the gap between the issues, experiences and strategies students wish to emphasise and those which preoccupy teachers often being disturbingly wide. For example:-

Case story: An environmental Studies Project

A small group of teachers in a town in the provinces wanted to work with their classes in a more democratic way - largely guided by the didactic model presented towards the end of this chapter - and, together with their pupils, they decided to attempt to this innovation by working on the theme 'The Local Environment'. So, the mathematics teacher, for example, started his planning and turned-over in his mind a few ideas which he thought he might usefully introduce into the dialogue with his pupils. Somewhat predictably, he came up with thoughts about mathematical items in the local environment which he thought the students could measure and draw. After a tour of the neighbourhood, however, the students themselves handed-in a list of the ideas THEY had determined to study, ideas which the students had grouped into four areas to which they wanted to give special priority:

* The provisions made in the local community for the elderly.

* Energy and water supplies to the town where the project was being carried out.

* Issues of personal security and crime in the local area.

* The infrastructure of the community - particularly that to do with the town's facility as a freight-traffic harbour.

This list gave the Maths teacher his first problem - the pedagogical problem of how to service and to develop four different sub-topics at one and the same time. In the first group, the pupils wanted to collect some statistics and to interview some of the old people about what it was like to live in an old people's home; in the second, they wanted to make a functioning model of a water-tower. The third group wanted to make use of one of their number's father, who worked in insurance in the area and the fourth wanted to construct an exact 1:200 scale model of an oil-tanker in the harbour. The teachers of Danish, of geography, of biology and of history all had similar problems. Within the class groups, the pupils expressed a wish to work on different aspects of the chosen general theme. In addition, they also wanted to present and to share their work with their class-mates in ways different from those initially envisaged by the teachers. And all this was important to them, especially how they assessed their work - by making photo-exhibitions, by making models or by writing radio-plays.

After the scheme was completed the teachers were asked to evaluate their experience, to reflect upon both the process and the products of the project. Their immediate and heart-felt response was 'Well, we'll never do it again'. But a more detailed and considered evaluation resulted in the production of two lists by the teachers - good experiences and bad ones.

In the second of these there was a heavy focus upon topics like the effectiveness of communications between teachers - and they reported that it had been difficult to co-ordinate different lessons from different teachers, to hold-back from intervening too much and from trying to direct pupils towards what the teachers considered to be 'correct' curriculum content. Amongst the experiences evaluated as worthwhile, the teachers included reference to their impression that the pupils had worked hard and that the results of their work had been of a high standard; all groups had extended their investigations through field-work and quite a few parents had been involved as either guides or as sources of information. However, in our opinion, one of the most poignant conclusions recorded was:

> *'Although it might be fun to try something like this scheme again, if a similar innovation is to be attempted much more attention will have to be paid to empowering the pupils by involving them more systematically in pedagogical implementation and planning'.*

One of the main points, then, that this story illustrates about the processes by which alienation in pedagogical relations can get reduced is analogous with that which we have suggested is vital in research analysis and development - the application of principles of power-sharing. Parallel to the refinement of these principles as the basis for extending a democratic *research* process, we have also used them to construct a *didactic* model which is consistent with the ethics of the method and which allows for an effective and contingent development of pedagogical practice as the overall action-research programme unfolds. This didactic model is presented below, albeit in a rather formal statement. In presenting it like this we are trying to reveal several layers of its relevance. Relevances about how to manage power-sharing in the classroom in a manner that is principled, organised and consistent. Relevances about how to recognise the balance between the processes of cultural transmission and cultural creation in schools. Relevances about how to link lesson *processes* and the *products* of lessons more systematically with the business of power-sharing in classrooms.

We certainly don't see the following model as a gospel. It is simply the best we have got so far. But it really does have the merit of having been constructed through and during projects centred in democratic action research.

The didactic Model

From Classrooms to Workshops for Experience

If pupils are to be given *real* experience, the whole of their school and each one of their classrooms must, it seems to us, function as a kind of a workshop - particularly in the early part of their school experience. The classroom must become a place where children can gain direct experience and direct knowledge; we must break away from a tradition whereby the normal mode of instruction is either presentation by teachers or by children working on assignments and texts. This pedagogical approach might satisfy the teacher's vision of what is important for the children, but it is not necessarily the same one as that held by the children themselves. Workshop education provides a real chance for giving children the opportunities both to work and to be active. The object of such work is for children to grasp, in a practical way, just what it is that one must understand to become proficient in some activity or area of thinking and what it is that one can do to develop oneself as a human being. To achieve this end, workshop education must be organised in such a way that the conditions are created for the pupils to administer the *whole* of the work process. Work processes which have ideational, productive and evaluative phases. They start with someone imagining or attempting to visualise something; one has an idea in prospect, a vision of what might be. One then takes action on the basis of this idea, learning along the way. And when one has finished, one asks 'Is this what I wanted?' and 'What now'? Children in school should become very familiar with this process if they are to control their work. Throughout the rest of their lives this will be the pattern of how things will go when they are involved in any activity. Each time one starts something new one has an idea - or one can imagine what it might be like. Then one tries to implement it and arrives at the question 'Did it turn out like I had imagined?'. Well, it almost never does - and for this reason we need to encourage pupils learning these processes to accept that experimenting and that being astonished are permissible and valuable, that learning is, in fact, the recognition of where ideas and actions get changed along the way.

The Pedagogy

School work, then, like any other human activity, consists of three basic components:

The Forming of Concepts.

The Taking of Actions.

The Evaluation of Outcomes.

This linear process applies whatever is the activity and whoever is the agent and wherever are the circumstances. Now clearly, we can decide the extent to which children are included or excluded from any stage or part of this process. They can shape their own ideas about both the form and the content of their work and these can be used as guidelines for activities in the classroom - or they can be ignored. Obviously, not everyone's ideas are realised from the start of a project and not all actions are accomplished smoothly or as planned. Similarly, co-operation and conversation with others is necessary for the execution of a whole activity and not all evaluations, therefore, can wait until the end of a string of actions. But if we are to democratise school work and if we are to help children to utilise their ideas and experiences through school work, then we need to ensure that they participate in each and every stage of the work process - conception, action and evaluation. The key question, however, is what pedagogical principles might apply so as to achieve such participation.

Workshop Education

Education which seeks to give children democratic rights and co-influence must ensure that it is possible for them to gain *direct* experience. Workshop education is to be arranged in such a way that pupils slowly but surely learn to manage the classroom work process. As we have explained above, an important part of this learning curve is the encouragement of experimentation and the requirement that pupils experience some of the consequences of working in the way they have proposed or influenced. As a way of handling the practical problems and possibilities which arise in workshop education, we have found it invaluable to apply the very same paired concepts we use in the organisation of action research method, and which we first introduced in chapter two of this book. There are six concepts and we normally see them as pairs, each pair having an individualistic (person) and a collectivist (group) reference:

Freedom of Speech and Freedom for Public Opinion

The main Education Act in Denmark lays down that all pupils have the right to express their ideas on issues to do with school work. But freedom of expression and the power of acting through public opinion belong together. There is little to be gained from expressing oneself if others do not listen and reply. If one's 'audience' does not adopt an attitude and put forward alternative views and opinions, it is questionable whether or not one has influence.

Resourcefulness and Self-administration

Participation in the work process requires that any individual involved has the resources with which she/he can act in each one of the phases of the process. But there is little point in taking actions unless they are of consequence; self-administration, then, is to do with taking responsibility for the consequences of one's own actions. The group reference here applies to the taking of a common or shared responsibility for the fulfilment of agreements which have been entered into with other people. On both their own account and in association with others, individuals must learn to administer as large a part of their lives as possible - and to do this in solidarity. Resourcefulness as paired with self-administration shows itself particularly when ideas and decisions need to be put into practice. This requires both skill and knowledge. Such democratic ability is something over and above mere 'meeting techniques'.

Individual and collective Development

Social fellowships are built upon interests, inclinations and agreements. But schools are not voluntary fellowships and are built upon power-structures. The experience in the classroom of some kind of restriction on the amount of influence one has as an individual will frequently result in one or two of the participants dominating a mutually significant relationship. The widest and most fruitful of fellowships are developed when those involved in the relationship have a free hand in developing themselves as individuals AND as members of the group. It is essential that an individual can visualise the various and varied possibilities for further development of both self and group which could be achieved through a fellowship.

Four Fields of Learning

To qualify didactic planning, workshop education must, as a minimum, provide a child with every chance of gaining different kinds of experience and, thereby, of developing versatility. The key question in this kind of planning changes from 'What can they learn?' to 'How can they become more versatile?'. To deal with this question, we operate with a didactic model which consists of four fields of learning:

> *Children gain experience when involved in manual production. We call this the manual-productive field of experience.*
>
> *They also learn when experimenting and when seeking knowledge in a systematic manner. We call this the scientific-experimental field.*
>
> *They gain experience and new aptitudes when active in artistic and physical areas. The artistic-bodily field.*
>
> *And, finally, children gain experience through communicating and through interacting and working with others. The most important element of this is dialogue - of being active in discussions, in reading, in writing, in sending and receiv-*

ing messages and in reaching agreements. And we call this the socio-linguistic field of experience.

In a number of fairly obvious ways, these fields of experience overlap with each other. However, there are some important ways in which they are quite distinct.

The Manual-Productive Field

The characteristic aspect of this type of experience is that one produces something which one has conceived of before starting to work upon it. We can talk about workshop education being *democratically* organised when all participants take an active part in the *conception* phases as well as the production and evaluation phases of the work being accomplished.

The Scientific-Experimental Field

In this field one does not always have a clear idea as to the actual results which might be achieved from one's activities, but some methods of approach and some provisional belief about what is *likely* to emerge is a prerequisite.

The Artistic-Bodily Field

Here it is the sensuous aspect which is central in the perception and formation of learning experiences. When working with self-expression, it often proves to be the case in schools that conception, production and evaluation phases run in series. But when judged as sufficient by those involved, conception and production fuse.

The Socio-Linguistic Field

Although socio-linguistic activities arise as part of the actualisation of all of the other three fields of learning experience, it is still worth keeping it as a category of experience in its own right. Thus, activities in this field can be either the means of realisation in another field or subjects in themselves. A considerable part of cultural mediation is linguistic; in planning, in conversation, in song, in working with texts, images and pictures.

Cultural Mediation and Cultural Production

Cultural mediation is an essential part of school democratisation; this is because an individual's concepts and expressions form part of a mutuality that is social. Furthermore, they are the essential background needed to comprehend and to understand social differences and the conditions of social life. The basic abilities in this sphere of social development - reading, writing and self-expression - are also important in the development of one's own, personal resourcefulness.

Several Types of Activity

To achieve the principles detailed in the above, the teachers, we have worked with have come to prepare themselves in ways which differ from more usual methods. This preparation typically:

- provides for several types of activity to be in progress in a 'lesson' at the same time.
- ensures that all work is planned together with the pupils.
- provides that the possibilities for action are many, various and open-ended.
- ensures that the *phases* of the work process are made clear, in both plan and operation.

and,

- provides that agreements are reached, are maintained and are reviewed and changed.

Chapter twelve

How to get further in Innovation?

Improving Education

The weight of our discussion until now has been placed *mostly* in a perspective which sees the school as a microcosm, as a special organisational culture, although it is very evident that no institution is the preserve of some island-based tribe, nor can it be seen as such. This is especially true of schools. They are essentially workshops for complex cultural exchanges - many of which derive their energy from outside of the immediate context of the school building or its interactional setting. Nevertheless, as action researchers and educational analysts, perhaps our primary function is to try to advance those dynamic dialectics and to nurture that creative courage that is contained within teacher-researcher partnerships. This is not quite as modest an ambition might first appear. Such a task is not just a question of establishing space for new ideas but, just as much, it involves reaching-out for a comprehensive understanding of the cultural work of schools and of how they themselves articulate with wider social systems. These linkages, however, are complex and it would be the height of folly at the end of a book like this to try to embark on such a complicated new venture - and who ever got a reward for taking that kind of risk? Instead, let us review and extend some of the comments we have included in previous chapters upon how school culture and cultural relations in school can be understood as a basis for democratic innovations and of the implications of this understanding.

As we have pointed-out on several occasions in this book, the school has a duality of function - the handing-over of culture and the production of new cultural forms. It is in the execution of the first of these, cultural mediation - which is both the function most emphasised in very many schools and also the actual site of cultural development - that we can find the link. This is the point of contact, the permanent connection between the micro-culture of the school and the macro-culture of the wider community. But we should also realise that teachers in school can exercise choice as they actualise this connection. They can take into consideration the impact children's cultural background has for their access to and learning of culture with a capital C. These reflections are evocative - especially if we use them to direct attention towards other aspects of managing these moments rather than, say, trying to lessen their impact.

How to open-up to a wider Collectivity

> *"It's not the easiest job to supply these kids with the necessary cultural techniques, so long as they stay so unstimulated. Some of them suffer from a lack of the most essential general knowledge and norms and parents sometimes hand-over to the school the job of socialising the kids in this stuff."*

The macro-culture penetrates and preserves links with the school culture through the norms, the collective values and the priorities which are embedded in the daily praxis of schools. It also works through the normative cultural understandings which are carried into the school by teachers, pupils or other participants as part of their biographical luggage. As individuals, each of us has some special association with our immediate and our more distant social formation - it is a side of our identity. The crucial question is whether or not the school is conscious of what this cultural connection implies. Or, more positively, whether or not the school is conscious and confident about how it could be insightful and interventionist with culture. Behind most of the discussions about democratic innovation and the contribution action research can make to such innovation, we have tried to establish the basic viewpoint that democratisation is quintessentially to do with analysing and developing a democratic organisational culture - i.e., that changes of praxis should reflect and reinforce not only technical improvements but also give a deeper insight and a wider experience of democratic culturation. What we have in mind here is some kind of production of cultural content and cultural form which can benefit from the special place and function the school has as an institution - namely that the product and the processes of school work are not (directly) submitted to market mechanisms. This relative autonomy gives as such not the worst of backgrounds against which civic socialisation can be set and one which, in our experience, allows one to raise some rather potent expectations about the resourcefulness, and professional imagination of teachers. The implications work in both directions in this connection. The community outside the school can influence what goes on inside. On the one hand this could be obstructive influence - whereby local groups seek to control resources and practices in school with a specific intention of blocking innovation or of preserving traditional methods and programmes. But, on the other hand, this influence can be constructive - in cases where, for example, the school becomes, say, a physical centre of life in the community and a community resource and, as a consequence of this, the need to integrate the purpose of schooling and the purposes of community association collide. However, the really important sense of influence from the point of view of action research is more fundamental - though possible less immediately visible.

Democratic responsibility for new members of a community like school children is learned first and foremost through experience. This means that the efforts of all those seeking to increase the opportunities for such a learning experience and to enrich and extend those experiences themselves are inextricably linked with community development - if only to the extent to which the school's activities IN the local community will be able to make positive or negative contributions to the negotiations teachers and pupils are obliged to work upon if they are to achieve their transformative goals.

Likewise, the school will have to consider how it can generate those methods and strategies best suited to having experiences from the school as a cultural centre organised through democratic co-operation carried back out into the local area. This approach has the best chance of being realised if neither the concepts used to define a schools' place in a local culture nor those concepts used within schools of the local culture in which it is embedded are too tightly bound by mutual deficit understandings. The replacement of such conceptualisations with ones which are interwoven with notions of cultural coexistence and of multiple partnership is a concrete aim for action research - the development of the local culture in the school and of the school in the local culture.

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In this book, the chosen theme is the democratic school - or, more precisely, the democratisation of school processes. And behind this selection lies a confidence in the power of the concept. Democratisation is about dealing with differences - differences in the visions and wants that inspire us, differences in the abilities and the resources we possess to reach towards such goals and differences in what we know and understand. As such, the concept provides a firm basis for concocting a strong antidote to the norms, standards and *uniformity* of the application of market logic to educational analysis and policy-making. By pointing the spot-light directly upon the *differences* between people and groups and how these are both something one has to deal with in some way or other and something which provides possibilities for really fruitful, creative life-chances, it keeps on forcing open the debate about how to define the 'three Es' of market principles in education - economy, efficiency and effectiveness. It is a basis for resistance.

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